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ABSTRACT

Following an executive summary and introduction, the report is divided into four chapters. Chapter 1 presents evidence of hunger in Texas, which is revealed to be a growing problem. Statistics on the number of persons living in poverty, unemployed persons not receiving unemployment insurance benefits, and persons seeking food assistance from both public and private sources are examined. Chapter 2 analyzes data and testimony received at public hearings on the need for food assistance among the following target groups: the elderly, women, infants, and children, and "new poor" families and individuals. The application of State resources to address the hunger problem faced by each of these population groups, it is argued, would be highly cost-effective. Chapter 3 describes the food stamp program administered by the Texas Department of Human Resources (TDHR). Finally, Chapter 4 offers the committee's recommendations, including legislative measures. These recommendations focus on suggested State initiatives geared toward eliminating hunger and malnutrition in Texas. An appendix contains a history of Federal efforts to combat hunger and brief descriptions of each Federal State-funded food assistance and nutrition program currently operating in Texas. (KH)

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FACES OF HUNGER IN THE SHADOW OF PLENTY

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FACES OF HUNGER IN THE SHADOW OF PLENTY

SENATE INTERIM COMMITTEE ON HUNGER AND NUTRITION

1984 REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Senate Interim Committee on Hunger and Nutrition

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Chairman

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November 30, 1984

The Honorable William P. Hobby, Jr.
Lieutenant Governor of Texas

Pursuant to your request to examine the issue of hunger and nutrition in Texas during the current interim and submit our findings to the 69th Legislature, the Senate Interim Committee on Hunger and Nutrition herewith transmits its report and recommendations.

Respectfully submitted,

Hugh Parmer, Chairman

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In particular, we would like to thank:

- The thousands who responded to survey questionnaires which provided important documentation of the problem of hunger in Texas;
- The more than three hundred citizens who testified before this committee at public hearings throughout the state;
- The Texas Department on Aging, the Texas Department of Health, the Salvation Army, the Baptist General Assembly, Texas IMPACT, and the Texas Legal Services Center for their cooperation with the committee in the collection of original survey data; and John Gould for his assistance in computer processing and analyzing data from these surveys;
- The numerous agencies who provided testimony, data and technical expertise to the committee as needed;
- The staff of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Resources, the Anti-Hunger Coalition of Texas, and the Texas Dietetic Association for their ongoing technical assistance and consultation;
- Betty J. Button for her assistance in editing this report.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Texans have long prided themselves as citizens in a state of enormous opportunity; a state with an abundance of land and agricultural resources. Yet, in this state of plenty, hunger exists. There is more hunger in Texas than meets the eye; more perhaps than most Texans would tolerate with an easy conscience.

THE MANY FACES OF HUNGER IN TEXAS

There are many faces of hunger in Texas. It is the face of a steelworker in Pasadena, who finds himself unemployed, and talks of suicide because he cannot provide for his family. It is the face of a young mother in the Rio Grande Valley whose child goes without food a few days each month because she doesn't have enough money. It is the face of an elderly person, collecting cans in order to redeem them for cash to buy groceries. Hunger affects many more Texans than most would expect. And in the 1980's, the economic recession, high rate of unemployment, depression of the oil industry, devaluation of the peso, and cutbacks in federal food assistance programs are responsible for further exacerbating a problem already chronically facing traditionally poor families.

THERE IS CONCRETE EVIDENCE THAT HUNGER IS A GROWING PROBLEM TODAY IN TEXAS

Hunger, as viewed by this committee is "the condition experienced by an individual who goes without adequate food for an intermittent or extended period of time."

After 12 public hearings, four statewide surveys and extensive data collection, it is clear that hunger exists in Texas and is a growing problem in the 1980's. More often than not, the cause of hunger is insufficient income or lack of resources. Additionally, barriers to access for services and a lack of awareness and education regarding proper diet contribute to the problem.

In Texas, the number of individuals living at or below the poverty line has increased substantially since the 1980 census. In 1980, the poverty rate in this state was 14.7% affecting approximately 2 million people. By 1982, the rate had climbed to 15.2% affecting close to 2.4 million Texans. Population projections predict a continued increase in the poverty rate in our state with close to 3 million Texans living in poverty by 1985.

The growing problem of hunger in Texas is best characterized by the dramatic increase in the number of people seeking emergency food assistance, most of whom are families with children and elderly individuals. A statewide survey conducted by this committee among 1,893 providers of emergency food assistance demonstrates this escalating need for emergency food. In 1980, these providers (most of whom are churches and private sector providers) helped 889,303 persons. In 1983, that number had more than doubled to include 1,874,672 persons. Additionally, providers of emergency food report receiving over 70,000 requests for food each month, turning away at least 20,000 of these due to lack of resources to meet the need.

Those living on low-income budgets are often eligible to receive food assistance from the Food Stamp Program. In 1984, the Texas Department of Human Resources (TDHR) reports serving an average monthly Food Stamp caseload of 1,333,846 persons. TDHR estimates that 11.3% of these people have no income at all, and 68.9% of the caseload is comprised of children, elderly and disabled persons.

Unemployment also plays a major role in the hunger problem because food is the "flexible factor" in the monthly budgets of those with limited income who must pay "inflexible" bills such as rent and utilities in order to survive. The unemployment rate in Texas rose dramatically from 5.3% in 1981 to 8% in 1983. The number of unemployed workers in the civilian labor force grew by 63% during that same period of time. In 1984, while the rate of unemployment has begun to decline, there are still over 500,000 unemployed workers in Texas.

Hunger can take a negative toll on an individual's health and lack of sufficient food can cause disease and in some cases, death. Seven of the ten leading causes of death in Texas are believed to be linked to nutritional status. Food is used by the body to generate energy, to provide the raw materials for growth and development, and to help the human organism stay healthy. When a person does not get an adequate quantity or quality of food, adverse health effects can result, particularly if the deficiency is maintained over a long period of time. The Texas Department of Health recently documented over a three year period 513 deaths, primarily among elderly persons, due to malnutrition.

HUNGER IS WIDESPREAD AND AFFECTS MANY IMPORTANT POPULATION GROUPS IN TEXAS

THE ELDERLY

Elderly persons, many of whom must live on fixed incomes, are particularly sensitive to the imposing problem of hunger. Statistics indicate that the elderly population is growing rapidly. According to the 1980 census, elderly Texans numbered close to 2 million in 1980, and in 1984 almost two and a quarter million. Statewide 18% (391,000) of these seniors live below the poverty level while another 560,000 live slightly above the poverty line. Thus, a total of 951,000 older Texans must exist on extremely limited resources and therefore may routinely have a hard time making ends meet. Ten percent (10%) of Texas' elderly population received congregate meals through the Nutrition Program for the Elderly in 1984, and 1.5% received home-delivered meals.

A statewide survey conducted by this committee among 1,752 elderly recipients of congregate and home-delivered meals revealed that overall 34% would go hungry were it not for the meal they receive. Among those receiving only home-delivered meals, the data indicates an even graver need with 62% saying they would go hungry without the meal service. Of all the respondents, 58% said the program provided their only complete meal of the day, while 68% said they depend on the meal five days per week. After paying for such items as rent, utilities, and health care, 33% stated they often do not have enough money to buy food. Many report that "they do without" in order to get by, and have no food resources other than the meal provided five days per week. Of these, many also report splitting the meal they receive, saving half for later in the day. Still others report depending on cereal and milk for supper.

WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN

In February 1984, the Texas Department of Health conducted a statewide survey on hunger, primarily among recipients of the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). WIC serves low-income pregnant women, new mothers, infants, and children up to age five who are at nutritional risk for problems such as iron deficiency, inadequate growth and inadequate diet. Of more than 1,300 respondents, 38% indicated they did not have enough money for food in January of this year. Those who reported a lack of money also indicated that mother, infant or child was skipping meals due to a lack of resources. As family income increased, mothers, infants and young children experienced less hunger, reporting fewer difficulties in obtaining sufficient food resources.

The WIC program served 22.5% of Texan women, infants and children potentially eligible to receive this assistance in 1984. Over 600,000 additional Texan women and children potentially eligible for the program did not receive assistance due to limited dollars provided by the federal government. In repeated testimony throughout the state, physicians and health professionals have pointed out the serious health risks, such as growth stunting and mental retardation, faced by children who do not get enough to eat.

THE "NEW POOR"

While traditionally poor families and households have experienced increasing hunger over the past few years, many "new poor" have joined their ranks. This growth in the "new poor" has been a direct result of the economic recession and rising unemployment rates. In a state with one of the lowest unemployment rates in the nation, it is shocking to learn of the thousands who are seriously hungry. Many must turn to the private sector for help because of pride or the fact that they do not qualify for programs like Food Stamps.

Churches in middle-class suburban settings report with increasing frequency that requests for food assistance from families in their local communities are significantly on the rise these last few years. The number of persons assisted by one Houston church located near NASA increased drastically from 63 persons in 1980 to over 800 persons in 1983. The people receiving assistance are neighbors of the church congregation; they are the typical American family.

The stress put on a family beset by hunger may result in family breakups and mental health problems. A hungry family can be torn apart at its roots by the struggle and humiliation involved in trying to obtain enough food, the shame of a head of household who cannot provide enough food for family members and children, the loss of hope which accompanies an inability to effectively manage overwhelming problems.

WE ARE NOT MEETING THE NEED FOR FOOD

We have not succeeded in meeting the need for food that has grown dramatically in this state. Federal food assistance programs targeted to the elderly and low-income women, infants and children

operate on limited federal grants. Therefore, the burden of serving the hungry falls predominantly on the federal Food Stamp program which is the nation's primary program to combat hunger and the only program that serves entire families in need. At a time when the numbers of impoverished and unemployed Texans have grown significantly, the Food Stamp Program has not kept pace with the growing need for food. Reasons for this include the bureaucratic barriers imposed by the federal government since 1981 that prevent or discourage eligible applicants from gaining public assistance. While the program was "tightened up" in order to reach those in greatest need, the testimony and case studies brought to the attention of this committee, make it clear that the number of people who are legitimately eligible for the program and are left out or kept off exceeds the number who incorrectly gain benefits. And a major problem exists in this state with regard to the unnecessarily restrictive issuance of Food Stamp benefits to help people in emergency situations.

The burden of helping the growing number of Texans in need of food also falls on the private sector which reports a 200% increase in demand for emergency food between 1980 and 1983. In Houston alone the rise has been close to 1000%. Many former middle and working class families, now unemployed, rely on charitable assistance from churches and other private sector groups in order to get by. Yet, the private sector has not been able to keep up with the demand. Private sector emergency food providers depend largely on donations of food and money, and their ability to provide assistance lacks consistency and varies significantly from season to season. It is not unusual for resources in the private sector to periodically run dry, especially when the demand runs high, or when other items, such as utilities, take up a bigger and bigger share of emergency assistance resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

In response to the growing problem of hunger and its widespread effects, this committee is recommending steps for action. The recommendations are formulated around those actions that are fiscally responsible as well as appropriate for state-level intervention.

An overview of proposed recommendations includes:

- Appropriation of supplemental state funds, totaling $12 million, for the Special Supplemental Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).
- Appropriation of sufficient supplemental state funds to meet the growing need for home-delivered meals for the homebound and frail elderly, and approval of state agency budget request to expand overall meal service to elderly Texans.
- Reauthorization of the state-funded Temporary Emergency Relief Program (TERP) with appropriation at the maximum funding level.
- Creation of a state-level Nutrition Coordinating Council to plan and provide liaison among agencies involved in administering food and nutrition programs.
- Nutrition education incorporated into school curricula and training programs for health professionals, provided for the general public and targeted to populations at greatest risk of health consequences due to inadequate diet.
- Development of a statewide nutrition monitoring and surveillance program.
- Careful monitoring of the issuance of emergency food stamp benefits in order to assure that eligible households are properly served.
- Distribution of nutrition education materials to recipients of Food Stamp benefits.
- Reduction of administrative burdens on Food Stamp Program staff and hardships on clients through actions such as additional waivers for monthly reporting, consistent statewide information verification practices, information for clients on the application process, and assistance in filing complete applications.
- Cooperation between public agencies and private groups to initiate active information and referral programs and emergency assistance networks.
- Initiation of operational procedures that allow the Agricultural Commodities program to operate as effectively and efficiently as possible.
- Involvement of agricultural producers in making donations of food and trucking of foodstuffs to food banks and other food distribution outlets.
- Development of a statewide community gardening program.

Additionally, the committee recommends that the state legislature actively pursue:

- Increasing the Aid To Families With Dependent Children (AFDC) monthly payments in Texas.
- Adding an AFDC-U component, available to all states, whereby unemployed families with two parents in the household can receive assistance.
- Amendment of Human Resource Code to authorize state participation in federal emergency assistance programs offered to Supplemental Security Income (SSI) applicants and needy families with children through the AFDC program.

INTRODUCTION

"We know that a child suffering from hunger cannot produce well in school and that a pregnant woman without appropriate nourishment is at risk of a poor pregnancy outcome. Let us pledge to do the best we can to see that our fellow citizens are assured healthy and productive lives."

–Texas state senator

Texans have long taken pride in the enormous opportunity afforded them by their state, a state almost apart from the rest of the nation in its tremendous amount of land and other natural and agricultural resources. In such a state of plenty, hunger is unacceptable. Yet, among many young, elderly, poor, and recently unemployed Texans, hunger exists today, no longer affecting only the traditional or chronic poor. In the 1980's, many formerly working and middle-class families have joined the ranks of hungry people due to the economic recession and rising unemployment rates. There is more hunger in Texas than meets the eye; more perhaps than most Texans would tolerate with an easy conscience.

Hunger is a highly emotional and complex issue. Striking at the heart of one of the most fundamental necessities of life: our need for food. This need is shared by all of us, whether rich or poor, employed or unemployed. Disavowing the existence of hunger in our state would be a grave error, an injustice to those unable to enjoy the fruits and prosperity of life due to the difficulty they encounter in merely getting enough to eat.

Citizens of this richly blessed state commonly hold the belief that none of our population should go hungry. Inherent in this belief is the premise that those who have worked all their lives and are now no longer employed, and those young children and elderly Texans living in poverty should have the opportunity to pursue healthy and productive lives.

Based on this committee's thorough evaluation of the public and private resources available to combat hunger in Texas, it is clear that gaps currently exist in the system designed to help those legitimately in need of assistance. Significant improvements must be made if we are to provide an ample opportunity for these individuals to help themselves attain healthier and more productive lives.

In 1983, legislative interest in hunger in Texas was sparked by reports from around the state that many people, through no fault of their own, are not getting enough to eat. The economic recession and high unemployment of the early 1980's, coupled with a federal "tightening" of food assistance programs had caused the number of hungry people to grow substantially.

In August 1983, Lieutenant Governor William P. Hobby Jr. created the Senate Interim Committee on Hunger and Nutrition, appointing State Senator Hugh Parmer of Fort Worth as chairman. Senator Hector Uribe of Brownsville and Senators Craig Washington and John Whitmire of Houston were also appointed to this special committee, which was charged to determine whether hunger is a problem in Texas, and, if so, what action the state should take toward alleviating the problem.

Upon receiving its legislative mandate, the committee set out to hold public hearings throughout the state, conduct research, gather data and document the character of the hunger dilemma. Twelve public hearings were conducted across Texas between December of 1983 and August of 1984, and site visits were made to senior meal sites, soup kitchens, food pantries, food stamp offices, schools, food banks, health clinics and private homes.

COMMITTEE HEARINGS

LOCATIONS	DATE
Houston	December 12, 1983
	January 11, 1984
Bryan-College Station	January 17, 1984
Waco	February 1, 1984
Fort Worth	March 1, 1984
Dallas	March 15, 1984
Pharr	March 27, 1984
San Antonio	July 16, 1984
Beaumont	August 3, 1984
Galveston	August 6, 1984
El Paso	August 20, 1984
Austin	August 28, 1984

Public testimony presented before the committee helped determine the research focus, which targeted primarily those population groups at greatest health risk, namely pregnant women, infants, children and the elderly. Of particular interest as well was the plight of the "new poor", those who have worked most of their lives and due to economic circumstances, such as prolonged unemployment, now have difficulty making ends meet financially.

The "new poor" have not previously participated in public assistance programs and many are ineligible for or unknowledgeable about federal food assistance programs.

Data were collected from the Texas Department of Human Resources, the Texas Department of Health, the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Department of Community Affairs, the Texas Department on Aging, the Texas Agricultural Extension Service and the Texas Employment Commission. Local agencies, universities, and health facilities dealing with food and nutrition also contributed information. Four statewide surveys were conducted by the committee staff to assess more fully the parameters of hunger in Texas. These included surveys on hunger and nutritional problems among the elderly, emergency food assistance in the private sector, and operation of food banks throughout the state. A survey was also conducted among legal aid offices statewide, specifically to address problems with the Food Stamp Program.

Following the completion of a full year of study, research, data collection and statewide public hearings, there is no doubt that substantial hunger exists in Texas. Committee findings parallel other studies conducted throughout the nation by groups such as the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the Citizens Commission on Hunger in New England, which have reported a vast increase in the number of people suffering from hunger in the 1980's.

This report documents the committee's findings and recommendations to the 69th Legislature which convenes January 8, 1985. It is organized to provide a cogent and straightforward analysis of hunger in Texas by presenting data, testimony and research findings.

Evidence that hunger does exist in Texas and is a growing problem is presented in the opening chapter. Chapter two examines the widespread parameters of the hunger problem documenting its existence among the elderly, women, infants, children and the "new poor". Adverse health effects of prolonged hunger and malnutrition are also discussed in this chapter. Explored in chapter three is the reality that public and private resources and programs in our state are not meeting the growing need for food assistance. Chapter four offers the committee's recommendations, including potential legislative measures. These recommendations focus on suggested state initiatives geared toward eliminating hunger and malnutrition in Texas. The appendix contains a history of federal efforts to combat hunger and description of each federal and state-funded food assistance and nutrition program currently operating in the state.

The committee's recommendations and supporting rationale statements are offered as reasonable and appropriate state responses to effectively remedy the problem. Implicit throughout the recommendations is a dedication to fiscal accountability and the maximizing of state and local resources available to alleviate hunger and malnutrition in Texas.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

"No longer is it a question of 'Is there hunger?' Yes there is. The question now is, what will we do about it?"
–director, ecumenical mission, Beaumont

Hunger exists in Texas and all evidence indicates that it is growing substantially, even today. It is experienced not only by homeless individuals and families who have lived in chronic poverty but now presents a very pressing problem for others who have worked all their lives, namely the "new poor" and those who are elderly. During a time of extensive agricultural productivity in Texas, it is shocking to discover the prevalence of hunger in our midst.

The paradox of hunger and inadequate nutrition in a land of plenty is one that we cannot ignore. It is the intent of this report to document hunger and malnutrition in Texas, analyze its causes and effects, and make recommendations to help remedy and alleviate the problem in this state. For the purpose of this report, hunger is defined as "the condition experienced by an individual who goes without adequate food for intermittent or extended periods of time." And it has many faces in Texas.

- It is the face of a steelworker in Pasadena, laid off two years ago from the plant where he had worked all his adult life and who finds himself still unemployed. He talks of contemplating suicide because he can no longer provide for his family as he had always done.
- It is the face of a young mother in the Rio Grande Valley whose infant and children go without milk and food a few days each month because she does not have enough money, and Food Stamps aren't sufficient to feed them through the end of the month.
- It is the face of an elderly man in West Texas who collects cans at the garbage dump behind the Tom Thumb grocery store to redeem them for cash to buy food.

The focus of this report is hunger, clearly perceived as having dramatic social, economic, and health effects. A hungry family can be torn apart at its roots by the struggle and humiliation which may be routinely involved in acquiring sufficient food, by the shame felt by heads of households unable to provide adequately for children and other family members, by the loss of hope which accompanies their inability to manage the overwhelming difficulties that beset their lives. Many individuals go "over the edge" and families often break up due to the chronic depression and loss of self-esteem resulting from these problems.

Hungry people generally subsist on fragile budgets. The Urban Institute reported in 1984 that the purchasing power of families in the lowest 20% of U.S. income brackets has declined since 1980, adversely affecting their ability to afford an adequate diet. A study by the University of Michigan documents that those living near the poverty level have unstable incomes; a major expense such as a health crisis can precipitate an extended financial setback. Food has been termed "the flexible factor" in the monthly budgets of these individuals and families and is the area that most often suffers as "inflexible" expenses such as rent and utilities, consume increasingly larger portions of already limited resources. During the past decade energy prices have multiplied by several hundred percent, having an especially severe impact on low-income families.

Health problems and nutritional inadequacies are likely to result from sustained hunger. According to the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, the major problem which results when an individual gets neither enough food nor the necessary nutritional elements, such as vitamins and protein, is malnutrition. Caused either by insufficient quantity or quality in one's diet, malnutrition may lead to disease and in some instances, premature death.

Hunger and malnutrition can take a negative toll on an individual's health. Seven of the ten leading causes of death in Texas are believed to be linked to nutritional status. Food is used by the body to generate energy, to provide the raw materials for growth and development, and to help the human organism stay healthy and prevent disease. When a person fails to get an adequate quantity or quality of food, adverse health effects can result, particularly if the deficiency is maintained over a long period of time.

Stories of hunger and inadequate food and nutrition are told by many Americans in 1984. Investigations and hearings conducted throughout the country have documented with distressing regularity the rise of hunger in America. In the 1980's, a resurgence of hunger has occurred among low-income Americans, primarily due to cutbacks in government programs. The alarming new incidence of hunger among formerly middle-class Americans is linked to the economic recession and prolonged high unemployment. Today hunger can be found in Texas suburbs, in Arlington, in Pasadena, in the myriad of Texas neighborhoods with garages and neatly

trimmed lawns, and it is perpetuated among those already poor who have become poorer and hungrier in recent years.

Hunger has not always been so widespread, however. Two decades ago, the nation declared a "war on hunger," buoyed by the economic prosperity and idealism of those times. The Food Stamp Program was expanded; School Lunch and Breakfast Programs were enhanced and meals made available free or at reduced prices to low-income children. Additionally, nutrition programs were designed and implemented in response to meet the needs of the elderly, including those who were homebound, and a food program was established to provide sound nutritional supplements to low-income pregnant women, new mothers, infants, and young children at critically vulnerable times in their lives.

These programs made a difference. Research and field studies in the late 1970's revealed that there were far fewer malnourished people in this country than in the late 1960's. By 1981, however, the positive trend toward eliminating hunger in this nation had taken a dramatic downward turn. Reports of escalating demand for emergency food, medical documentation of higher-than-expected numbers of children with inadequate patterns of growth, government statistics indicating a substantial rise in the number of poor and unemployed Americans, and numerous studies by public, religious, and civic organizations cumulatively brought to light the growing problem of hunger in the 1980's.

The weakening of successful federal programs through changes in governmental policies in the early 1980's precipitated a backsliding in the fight against hunger. High unemployment rates, the economic recession, and the vastly increasing number of people living in poverty have culminated in what is seen today as an "American hunger crisis." It is keenly felt across the face of this state, from rural to urban settings, east to west, and north to south. From Beaumont to El Paso, Fort Worth to Brownsville, the story is the same: *hunger exists in Texas.*

CHAPTER I

THERE IS CONCRETE EVIDENCE THAT HUNGER IS A GROWING PROBLEM TODAY IN TEXAS.

". . . there is hunger in this state. I see it every day . . . I know it's there."
–employee, Houston Department of Human Resources

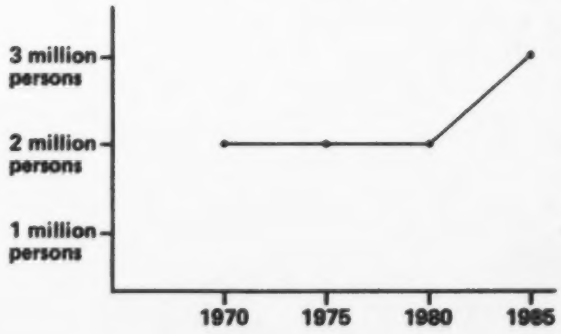
The measures generally accepted as most useful in determining the extent of those citizens at greatest risk of hunger are the number of persons living in poverty, the number of unemployed persons not receiving unemployment insurance benefits, and the number of people seeking food assistance from both public and private sources.

THE NUMBER OF TEXANS LIVING IN POVERTY IS GROWING

The means by which the federal government determines the poverty level is an important component in understanding how poverty is related to hunger and malnutrition in America. There is an obvious relationship between a lack of sufficient financial resources and a lack of adequate food, and in broad terms the definition of poverty in the U.S.A. is based on the cost of a minimum food budget. The federal government's poverty index was first developed in 1965, based on information collected from a 1955 National Food Consumption Survey determining the amount of money spent by low-income families for food. Combined with data from a 1961 U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) study showing the least amount of money families could spend on food while still meeting the minimum recommended dietary requirements, the government arrived at a minimum standard of living which has come to be known as the "poverty level." This level is adjusted annually for inflation based on the Consumer Price Index and currently stands at $10,200 for a family of four.

In Texas in 1970, the poverty rate was 18.8%, affecting 2,047,000 people. By 1980, the poverty rate had dropped significantly to 14.7%, although due to the population growth in the state, the actual number of poor individuals was roughly the same. By 1982 the poverty rate climbed to 15.2%, with 2,390,048 Texans believed to be living below the poverty line. Estimates for 1985 project a poverty rate reminiscent of the 1970 figures of 18.8%, and will affect nearly 3 million Texans.

POPULATION IN POVERTY IN TEXAS
1970 – 1985



Sources: U. S. Census Bureau and Texas Department of Community Affairs

A majority of those living in poverty in Texas are elderly persons and children, reflecting some of the important demographic changes occurring in society. Increasingly, poverty is found among single-parent families and children. Nationwide, the number of poor families headed by single women has increased by 54% since 1960. According to a 1984 report by the Children's Defense Fund entitled *American Children in Poverty*, 13 million children now live in poverty in the U.S.A., nine million of whom are under the age of six. They comprise 27% of the total number of poor people in the nation. In Texas, children make up 39% of the poverty population.

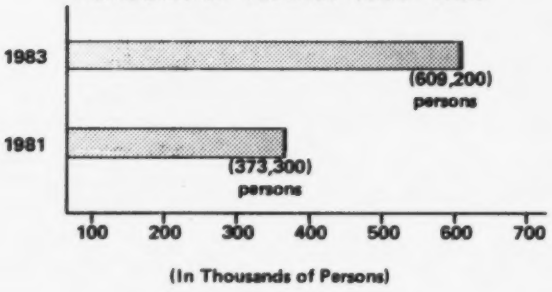
Due to recent fundamental changes in the structure of our economy, poverty has begun to include new faces, members of our society who have never before been poor and who have worked in productive capacities throughout their lives. These "new poor" who have lost or will lose their jobs as our economy changes from an industrial base to a service-oriented system, face years of hardship as they try to find other jobs or learn new skills.

UNEMPLOYMENT HAS RISEN IN TEXAS SINCE 1980

Because unemployment is considered a primary culprit in the resurgence of hunger in the 1980's, an examination of its parameters in this context is important. Unemployment rates in Texas rose substantially from 5.3% in 1981 to 8% in 1983. During those two years the labor force grew by 7%, but the number of unemployed workers increased by 63%.

Although Texas has historically maintained a relatively low unemployment rate, the state has recently been affected by the shifting tides of national unemployment. The Texas economy and employment levels have also been influenced by the effects of the slowdown in the oil industry, the devaluation of the peso, and the devastation of the citrus industry by the 1983 freeze.

GROWTH IN NUMBER OF UNEMPLOYED PERSONS IN TEXAS: 1981–1983



SOURCE: TEC

Many people from other regions of the country have flocked to the state's metropolitan areas in search of work, only to find that either the anticipated surplus of jobs no longer exists or that their skills do not fit the available job openings. A case in point is the city of Houston, long considered the "economic boom town" of America. In 1981, its unemployment rate stood at 4.2%, nearly the lowest of any city its size in the country. However, by 1983, unemployment in Harris County had risen to 9.6%, with 139,077 employable persons faced with an uncertain economic future. It seems that word had been slow to reach other areas of the country that in certain metropolitan areas of Texas, particularly Houston, a high surplus of jobs no longer exists.

On the other hand, Houston is not the only area in Texas that has suffered the severe effects of unemployment. Texas' relatively low statewide unemployment rate tends to mask pockets of high unemployment and economic hardship. The devaluation of the peso hurt the economies of border towns and cities, including El Paso and Laredo, and a freeze in late 1983 killed many of the Rio Grande Valley's citrus and other crops. This caused a rise in unemployment in the Rio Grande Valley area to greater than 30% in some locations. Layoffs in the petrochemical industry have increased unemployment drastically in the Gulf Coast's Golden Triangle Region. The Beaumont-Port Arthur-Orange area has experienced unemployment levels in the 11-15% range for the past few years, and with a recent lay-off of over 2,400 employees at a Texaco petrochemical refinery, the rate may soar to 20% before the end of 1984.

While the statewide unemployment rate dropped to 6.3% in July of 1984, 30 Texas counties were still experiencing unemployment rates of 9.6 or greater, at least 50% higher than the statewide average, and five urban counties had populations of more than 10,000 unemployed individuals in their resident populations. Unemployment rates for women, blacks, and Hispanics are also well above the state's overall average.

Unemployment has dropped noticeably in 1984, but there were still 516,100 unemployed persons in the Texas labor force as of July, and not all received unemployment insurance benefits. Seventy-five percent (75%) or 385,000 of those unemployed persons were *not* receiving unemployment insurance checks. This number strongly indicates the existence of those "new poor" persons, who often show up at churches and food pantries when they need help putting food on the table for themselves and their families.

TEXAS COUNTIES WITH HIGHEST UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

July 1984*

County	Unempl. Rate	Total No. Unemployed
Starr	31.6	3,052
Maverick	26.6	2,689
Zavala	24.7	1,312
Hidalgo	21.1	25,404
Webb	17.4	7,125
Garza	16.5	472
Orange	15.7	6,903
Cameron	14.6	14,093
Dimmit	13.9	829
Val Verde	12.9	1,624
Jasper	12.6	1,820
Newton	12.6	648
Uvalde	12.1	1,120
Presidio	12.1	278
Jim Hogg	11.8	329
LaSalle	11.8	244
Marion	11.6	474
Morris	11.2	714
Jefferson	11.1	13,903
Sabine	11.1	344
Matagorda	10.7	1,992
San Augustine	10.5	302
Galveston	10.2	9,785
El Paso	10.2	21,034
Tyler	10.2	610
Upshur	9.9	1,139
Zapata	9.8	387
Cass	9.7	1,239
Shelby	9.7	910
Nacogdoches	9.6	2,153

COUNTIES WITH MORE THAN 10,000 UNEMPLOYED**

July 1984*

Nueces	9.0	12,929
Harris	7.3	111,281
Bexar	5.5	27,925
Tarrant	4.3	24,588
Travis	3.7	10,422

*Data for July 1984 are preliminary -- subject to revision.

**With unemployment rates below 9.6 percent.

Source: TEC

TEXAS UNEMPLOYMENT RATES FOR WOMEN AND MINORITIES 1984

	Total	Females	Blacks	Hispanics
Jan.	7.3	7.3	14.2	11.8
Feb.	5.9	6.1	13.8	8.8
Mar.	6.5	6.4	15.6	11.0
Apr.	6.4	7.6	13.6	10.0
May	5.6	6.3	11.3	9.8
June	5.5	6.0	11.8	8.8
July	6.3	7.3	14.0	10.0

Source: Current Population Survey, conducted monthly by the Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U. S. Department of Labor

TEXAS UNEMPLOYMENT 1984:
RECIPIENTS OF UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE BENEFITS

	State Unemployment Rate	Number of Unemployed Persons*	Number Receiving Unemployment Insurance Benefits	Number of Persons Exhausting Unemployment Insurance Benefits
January 1984	7.3	555,800	96,590	66,428
July 1984	6.3	516,100	67,089	63,515

*Civilian Labor Force

Source: TEC

THE NUMBER OF TEXANS NEEDING FOOD ASSISTANCE IS GROWING.

"No one can dispute the fact that 120,000 plates of food were served at pantry shelters shortly after the Christmas freeze."
–healthworker, Rio Grande Valley

THE PRIVATE SECTOR

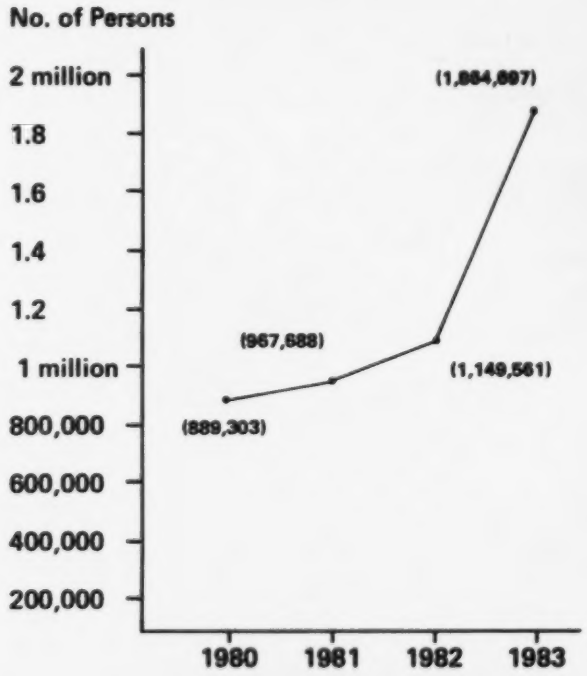
Since 1980, the growth in demand for food assistance from the private sector, which addresses predominantly emergency needs, has been remarkable. During the summer of 1984, this committee conducted a statewide survey among 1,893 churches, Salvation Army units, St. Vincent de Paul Society groups and numerous other private sector emergency food providers. Results of this survey graphically demonstrate that hunger and the need for emergency food definitely exist in Texas and have been growing in recent years. The number of people served by the responding agencies jumped significantly from 889,303 in 1980 to 1,874,672 in 1983. In 1984, the need has continued to grow, and cumulatively, survey respondents report receiving over 70,000 requests for food *per month*, more than 20,000 of which must go unserved due to lack of resources.

On-site meals served by the Salvation Army alone totaled 1,234,598 in 1983, a marked increase over the 868,309 provided in 1981. A total of 189,868 units of financial assistance, which included food boxes and food vouchers, were provided in 1983 in addition to the more than one million on-site meals served in this state. During the first five months of 1984, the Salvation Army reports serving more than one half million meals throughout the state, indicating that the dramatic need has not abated.

Survey respondents cite unemployment, lack of financial resources, the large influx of newcomers to Texas, and cuts in government assistance as the major factors contributing to the problem of hunger. The survey further documents the demand for emergency food among the "new poor." Since these individuals and families have never before been dependent on the public welfare system, they frequently encounter difficulty in gaining access to it and pride is often a barrier to seeking public help. Additionally, they may not qualify for programs such as Food Stamps where very strict asset and resource limits must be met in order to be eligible for benefits.

Although claims of an "economic recovery" emanate from federal government sources, the demand for emergency food assistance in Texas continues to grow. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of responding service providers report that they frequently run out of food. In Houston alone, where there are over 100,000 unemployed persons, the Interfaith Hunger Coalition, consisting of over 200 pantries throughout the city, reports that in July of this year, the documented demand for emergency food was higher than ever, with no end in sight to this rising need.

NUMBER OF PERSONS IN TEXAS RECEIVING FOOD ASSISTANCE FROM PRIVATE SECTOR SOURCES 1980–1983

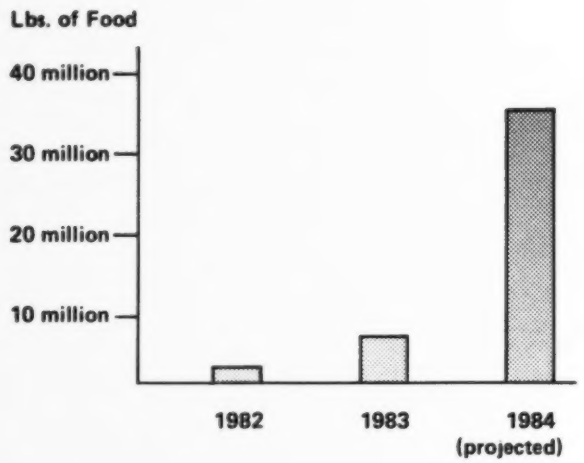


Source: Senate Interim Committee on Hunger and Nutrition (Survey)

A random-sample needs assessment survey conducted in 1983 among 3,000 low and low-moderate income families in Brownsville also revealed hunger in that area of the state. Forty percent (40%) of the respondents stated that they could not acquire the food they needed for their families. This indicates that at least 18,700 people in the city of Brownsville were not getting enough to eat.

The results of another committee survey conducted among food banks throughout the state firmly support the evidence that demand for emergency food assistance from the private sector is escalating. Food banks report distributing almost 30 million pounds of food during the first six months of 1984, of which an average of 65%, or 19 million pounds, went specifically for emergency use. Of these same food banks, 40% report that the demand for emergency assistance has risen during the past year, and 75% cite that the demand is greater than they can meet with available food.

POUNDS OF FOOD* DISTRIBUTED BY TEXAS FOOD BANKS 1982 – 1984



* excluding USDA commodities
Source: Senate Interim Committee on Hunger and Nutrition (Survey)

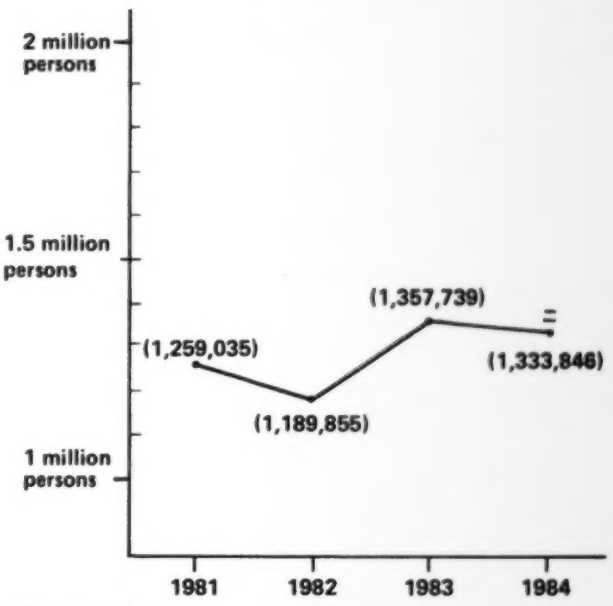
These Texas surveys parallel the findings of other research studies conducted throughout the nation. The U.S. Conference of Mayors, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. General Accounting Office and others have all documented the growing demand for emergency food assistance in this country, and mayors of many U.S. cities have cited hunger as the most serious problem they face.

THE PUBLIC SECTOR: THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM

The best indicator of the demand for food assistance from the public sector is the number of applicants and recipients of Food Stamp benefits. The Food Stamp Program is the nation's primary program to alleviate hunger and is the only federal food assistance program that provides help to entire families. The program is an entitlement program. Thereby, all persons designated as eligible should be able to receive benefits.

As the poverty rate and the demand for private sector food assistance have escalated, so has the demand for Food Stamps. Applications for the Food Stamp Program rose 16% between 1981 and 1983. While the number of applicants rose, indicating an increased need, the number of Food Stamp recipients in Texas actually fell in 1982 due to a federal tightening of eligibility criteria and other procedural changes. In Fiscal Year (FY) 1984, the Texas Department of Human Resources (TDHR) reports serving an average monthly Food Stamp caseload of 1,333,846 individuals. The average recipient household size was composed of 3.2 persons, and average monthly benefits per household totaled $138.42. TDHR estimates that 90% of the caseload had income below the poverty level, and 10.9% of the recipients had no income at all.

NUMBER OF FOOD STAMP RECIPIENTS IN TEXAS FY 1981 – FY 1984



Source: TDHR

TDHR also reports that in FY 84, 67% of Food Stamp households were headed by women. Children, elderly persons, and disabled individuals constituted 68.9% of the caseload and 51% of all recipients were Mexican-Americans. Geographically, South Texas had the greatest number of Food Stamp recipients, likely due to the prevalence of chronic poverty, the extreme severity of unemployment, and the economic recession in that area.

In sharp contrast to the escalating demand in the private sector, there has been a severe drop in the expedited issuance of Food Stamps in emergency situations. Food Stamps are issued on an expedited basis, within 5 days, to those applicants indicating serious need and meeting the eligibility criteria established by Congress. Eligibility criteria for expedited issuance are more restrictive than those for regular Food Stamp benefits. In 1983, TDHR reported that a monthly average of 14,984 individuals received expedited Food Stamp issuance. In 1984, however, this number fell sharply by 44% to an average expedited issuance of 7,854. Yet during the same period, private sector emergency providers report drastic increase of 62% in the number of people needing emergency food. This 62% increase constitutes 715,136 more persons receiving help from the private sector in 1984 than in 1983.

"I have seen this hunger thing grow, and grow, and grow."
–director, church emergency assistance organization, Galveston

Estimates of those potentially eligible for Food Stamps are based on the number of people with incomes at or below 125% of the poverty level. In 1980, there were 2,740,000 Texans (19.7% of the state's population) living at this "near poverty" level. In August 1984, the Texas Department of Human Resources estimated that roughly 3.2 million Texans live at this "near poverty" level and would qualify for Food Stamps. Of these, only 1,333,846, or approximately 41.8%, were actually receiving Food Stamp benefits. This was a slight decrease in service from the 1,357,739 persons in the FY 83 Food Stamp caseload and came at a time when demand for assistance from the private sector had skyrocketed.

ETHNICITY OF FOOD STAMP RECIPIENTS
FY 1984

ANGLO	18.7%
BLACK	27.9%
MEXICAN-AMERICAN	51.2%
INDIAN	.2%
ASIAN	1.1%
OTHER	.9%

Source: TDHR

NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH NO REPORTED INCOME RECEIVING FOOD STAMPS
FY 1982 – FY 1984

	FY 82	FY 83	FY 84
No. of Households	27,183	48,144	42,796
% of Caseload	7.4%	12.06%	10.89%

Source: TDHR

CHAPTER II

HUNGER IS WIDESPREAD AND AFFECTS MANY IMPORTANT POPULATION GROUPS IN TEXAS

Consistent testimony received at public hearings across the state has indicated the pressing need for food assistance among the following target groups: the elderly, women, infants and children, and "new poor" families and individuals. Thorough research, data collection, and evaluation have led the committee to focus its efforts on identifying the extent of the problem, the health consequences of inadequate nutrition, and the gaps and barriers to comprehensively and effectively meeting the need for food and nutrition assistance among these target groups. The application of state resources to address the hunger problem faced by each of these population groups would be highly cost-effective.

ELDERLY PERSONS

"We find elderly persons arriving early each morning hungry. Any delay in the arrival of meals at centers or to the homebound recipients causes much stress, even panic."
–director, elderly nutrition program, Houston

Elderly persons, many of whom must live on fixed incomes, are particularly vulnerable to the imposing problem of hunger. According to the 1980 census, elderly Texans numbered close to 2 million, 480,707 of whom lived in or near poverty. Population estimates indicate that the elderly population is growing rapidly in Texas and at least one-third of this growth is among low-income elderly persons.

A three-part survey conducted by this committee in cooperation with the Texas Department on Aging has brought into focus the distinct need for increased meal assistance and the difficulties encountered by many older people in obtaining adequate nutrition. The survey was conducted across the state among seven Area Agencies on Aging (AAA's), 29 nutrition projects, and 1,752 elderly recipients of congregate and home-delivered meals provided through Title III of the Older Americans Act.

Survey results revealed that 34% of the program participants would go hungry were it not for the congregate or home-delivered meals. Among those receiving only home-delivered meals, the data indicate an even graver need with 62% saying they would go hungry without the meal service. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of all respondents said the program provided their only complete meal of the day, while 68% said they depend on the meal service five days per week. Of home-delivered meal recipients, 69% indicated this was their only complete meal of the day and 78% reported they depend on the meal five days per week.

SURVEY RESPONSES ON HUNGER AMONG ELDERLY PERSONS* IN TEXAS RECEIVING CONGREGATE OR HOME–DELIVERED MEALS

RESPONSES BY GEOGRAPHIC AREA

	Lower Rio Grande	Deep East	Tarrant County	West Texas (El Paso)	Harris County	South Plains (Lubbock)	Houston–Galveston
"This is my only complete meal today."	73%	64%	59%	58%	52%	49%	48%
"I would go hungry without this meal."	52%	23%	34%	28%	27%	20%	38%
"After paying bills, I don't have enough money for food."	46%	21%	24%	19%	38%	19%	47%

* 1,752 elderly persons surveyed
Source: Senate Interim Committee on Hunger and Nutrition (Survey) 1984

Thirty-three percent of the 1,752 respondents stated that after paying for such items as rent, utilities, and medical care, they often do not have enough money to buy food. The AAA and nutrition project respondents in the seven geographic areas surveyed cited the lack of disposable income as the leading cause of hunger among the elderly, followed by a lack of knowledge about proper diet. In handwritten comments, over 50% of the elderly survey respondents reported having barely enough food at home, and stated that they depend on relatives to bring them food and lend them money to live. Many split the meal they receive from the program, saving half for later in the day. Still others rely on cereal and milk for their evening meal.

"Senior citizens tend to pay their bills before they eat. The result is that many have nothing left to get food with."
–director, St. Vincent de Paul Society

SURVEY RESPONSES ON HUNGER AMONG ELDERLY PERSONS* IN TEXAS RECEIVING CONGREGATE OR HOME–DELIVERED MEALS

	% of All Respondents	% of Home-Delivered Meal Recipients
"This is my only complete meal today."	58%	69%
"I would go hungry without this meal."	34%	62%
"After paying bills, I don't have enough money for food."	33%	51%

* 1,752 elderly persons surveyed
Source: Senate Interim Committee on Hunger and Nutrition (Survey) 1984

The elderly population is especially vulnerable to malnutrition as well as hunger. Many suffer from chronic conditions requiring special diets but routinely go without necessary and proper foods because of dwindling resources, lack of knowledge, and inaccessibility to programs. Finding food to meet special dietary requirements is no easy task for seniors living on fixed incomes and having limited knowledge of proper diet. Among health conditions related to inadequate nutrition are deficiency diseases, impaired digestion, and overall susceptibility to infection. The Texas Department of Health documented 513 deaths in the state due to malnutrition between 1979 and 1982. Of these, 88% or 452 deaths were among persons over the age of 60. Three hundred occurred in individuals between the ages of 70 and 89, leading to a conclusion that the mortality rate associated with malnutrition increases significantly with age.

Mobility impairment often contributes to inadequate nutritional status among elderly persons, for whom access to an adequate diet is so important. Problems encountered in merely getting around, difficulties with shopping and cooking, and lack of appetite frequently present obstacles to adequate nutrition. Additionally, an aging person may lack the incentive to eat due to the loss of a spouse or the absence of encouragement or social support from friends.

"Poverty, loneliness, isolation, and fear of disability and lack of transportation, as you know, have long been known to contribute to the problem of malnutrition among the elderly."
–director, elderly nutrition project, El Paso

Based on the survey results, it is estimated that an additional 100,000 elderly individuals are in need of congregate and home-delivered meals in Texas. In August of 1984 when these findings were reported to the directors of all 28 Area Agencies on Aging in the state, there was a strong consensus among them that this number of older Texans needing meals is severely underestimated. The demand for nutritious meals, particularly home-delivered meals, is also predicted to grow exponentially in the next few years, due largely to the advent of Diagnostic Related Groups (DRG's) recently implemented in the Medicare reimbursement system as a cost containment measure. Because of DRG's, elderly individuals are likely to be sent home earlier following hospital stays. Thus, they will require more in-home services, including nutritionally adequate meals which are especially vital during convalescence.

The Department on Aging (TDoA) reports serving meals in FY 84 to an average of 280,000 unduplicated elderly persons, approximately 40,000 of whom received home-delivered meals. Those receiving home-delivered meals comprise 1.5% of the state's elderly population. The Texas Department of

Human Resources served an additional 4,600 persons through its similar meal program.

Due to the limitations in funding for the Nutrition Program for the Elderly, it becomes imperative that the Food Stamp Program provide benefits to those elderly eligible to receive them. Currently 8.8% of Texas Food Stamp recipients are over the age of 60, most of whom qualify because of fixed income for only a limited amount of assistance often totaling $10 per month. Nationwide, the Food Stamp participation rate among the elderly population is notably low, and older persons constitute a significant portion of those eligible persons left out of the program. Participation is particularly sparse among elderly persons living alone and those in rural areas. While older persons tend to be aware of the program's existence, many believe that they, themselves, would not qualify. Research findings released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture reveal that elderly individuals who receive Supplemental Security Income, or are already involved in some public assistance program are most likely to receive Food Stamps. Elderly persons already receiving assistance stand a better chance of being referred to and assisted in applying for the Food Stamp program than those outside the public assistance system. The obstacles associated with applying for Food Stamps, such as transportation, extensive verification of information, and waiting time frequently discourage elderly persons from even applying.

It is clear from the data and research findings, as well as the testimony presented before this committee that a substantial need for further expanded meal service is necessary in Texas, particularly in the area of home-delivered meals. Current federally-funded programs are limited in their ability to meet the growing need in this state; the time has come for the state to carefully address the problem with dollars targeted to help those elderly persons in most acute need.

WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN

"In our community today, we continue to see infants and children who suffer from inadequate nutrition."
–physician, San Antonio

While the elderly represent one population group seriously compromised by hunger, it is important not to lose sight of the younger families, children, and individuals who are similarly affected. Due to the economic recession and high unemployment rates, the burden of hunger has fallen increasingly on families and children, many of whom never experienced this before. The Texas Department of Human Resources (TDHR) reported that in 1984, 51.5% of Food Stamp recipients were children under the age of 18. This percentage represents 635,462 children, one-third of whom are infants and children under the age of six.

Results from this committee's emergency food assistance survey document a rising need among families and children. Of the 1,893 service providers who responded to this survey, 75% indicate they serve predominantly families, and 64% report serving more children now than in previous years. This contradicts the common public impression that those seeking help from food pantries and soup kitchens are primarily transient individuals. Even the Salvation Army, which generally is viewed as a primary source of sustenance to the homeless, reports serving an increasing number of families and children in local communities. Of the clients served by the Salvation Army in Texas in 1983 and 1984, 60% were families.

In February of 1984, the Texas Department of Health conducted a survey on hunger, among more than 1300 recipients of the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) in 13 areas of the state. WIC serves low-income pregnant women, new mothers, infants, and children up to age five who are at nutritional risk for problems such as iron deficiency or inadequacies in growth and diet. Thirty-eight percent (38%) indicated they had insufficient money for food in January of this year and that mother, infant, or child was skipping meals due to this lack of resources. As family income increased, mothers, infants and young children experienced less hunger, reporting fewer difficulties in obtaining adequate food resources.

Following the elderly population, pregnant women, infants, and children are likely to suffer the greatest harm to health when food is inadequate. Poor nutrition during pregnancy may compromise a mother's health and result in prematurity and low birth weight for the infant. Low birth weight accounts for more than half the infant deaths in the U.S.; a low birth weight baby faces thirty times the normal likelihood of dying before the age of one. In addition, hospitalization costs to bring a low birth weight baby up to normal weight average $15,000.

"Based on our evidence and observations at John Peter Smith Hospital, we strongly feel that hunger and malnutrition do exist to a significant degree. . . . and we must address these issues for the betterment of the next generation."
–physician, Fort Worth

The infant mortality rate (IMR) is commonly used as an indicator of the general health status of a society. While the IMR has declined in recent years, Texas' infant mortality rate rose slightly in 1983 from 10.8% to 11.0%. The Texas Department of Health speculates that economic problems contributed to this rise in infant deaths. In Texas, statistics indicate that the mortality rate among infants whose fathers are unskilled workers is twice that of infants with fathers in higher paying jobs.

Last year, two pregnant women were referred by physicians to the publicly supported Jefferson Davis Hospital in Houston because of starvation. This was the first time in at least 13 years where this type of referral had been documented in the hospital. Profiles of other nutritional problems in high-risk pregnancies at this hospital indicate significant weight loss during pregnancy, diet deficiencies, gestational diabetes, and iron-deficiency anemia.

A nutrition assessment conducted by the Houston City Health Department in the Sunnyside area indicated that 70% of the 200 children ages 1-5 had an inadequate milk intake, 41% an inadequate meat intake, and 90% an inadequate fruit and vegetable intake. Fifty per cent exhibited an inadequate intake of vitamin C and 70% an inadequate intake of vitamin A, which is recognized as the major cause of blindness in children.

A growing body of scientific evidence indicates that hunger and malnutrition present serious problems among poor infants and children. The adverse health effects of malnutrition in children, particularly young children, include deficiency diseases, growth stunting, and increased susceptibility to infection and disease. A child deprived of adequate nutrition as an infant is also at risk of mental retardation, learning disabilities, and behavioral problems because the human brain completes two-thirds of its growth by the age of one.

"Let me ask you, what nutritional value does a baby get from watered down formula?"
–community center worker, San Antonio

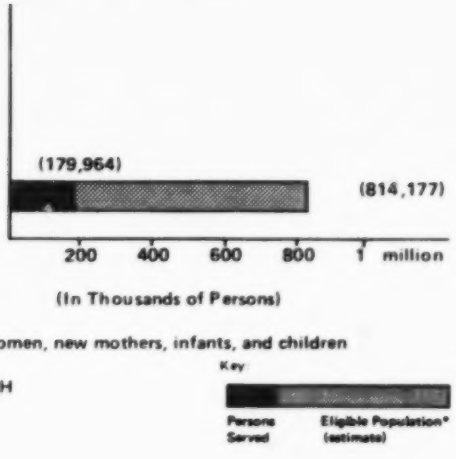
In numerous states around the country, studies examining the health of children have brought forth medical conclusions that a child's health is jeopardized when he or she experiences hunger on a regular basis. Physicians examining low-income children have found a higher than expected incidence of iron deficiency anemia, acute and chronic malnourishment, growth stunting, and "failure to thrive." In FY 84, evidence of iron deficiency was found in 63% of the children, 41% of the infants, and 55% of the pregnant women served by the WIC program. Additionally, 33% of the children had a diet inadequate for proper growth.

In FY 84, only 22.1% of those estimated as needing and eligible for the WIC program are served in this state. The 179,964 low-income women, infants, and children receiving help is a moderate number when compared to the 634,213 persons that go unserved. Based on the WIC survey results that docu-

mented 38% as hungry due to a lack of food and money, one could calculate that close to 250,000 additional low-income pregnant women, infants, and children eligible for WIC are at risk of hunger and the adverse health consequences associated with malnutrition.

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL FOOD PROGRAM FOR WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN (WIC)

Participation In Texas: FY 84



Source: TDH

The School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs provide low-income children with the benefits of one or two nutritious meals a day. In 1984, 2,787,678 children were eligible for these programs in Texas. Of this number 1,567,577 participated in the School Lunch Program and 416,849 participated in School Breakfast. During the 1983–1984 school year, 47% of the lunches and 82% of the breakfasts were served free to eligible low-income children.

Numerous mothers of low-income children receiving free or reduced-price school meals have been heard to say, "If it weren't for meals at school, my child would have nothing to eat today." School educators report that when making a home visit to parents of a child who is not doing well in school or who is a discipline problem, they often notice an empty refrigerator. They perceive hunger and nutritional inadequacies as primarily responsible for many of these children's educational difficulties. Conclusions of the Ten State Study on Nutrition, which included Texas, indicated that low-income children depended on the School Lunch Program for up to 40% of their nutritional intake.

"NEW POOR" FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS

"Recently a family with six children who had not eaten in two days came to us. . . . they simply did not know where to go for help."
–church worker, Houston

While traditionally poor families and households have experienced increasing hunger over the past few years, many "new poor" have now joined their ranks. This growth in the "new poor" population directly resulted from the economic recession and rising unemployment rates. In a state with one of the lowest unemployment rates in the nation, it is shocking to learn of the thousands who are seriously hungry. In order to survive, many middle-class families must expend in a year or two the savings they have accumulated over twenty years or more.

TEXAS UNEMPLOYMENT (1980-1983)

Year	Unemployment Rate	Number of Unemployed Persons *
1980	5.2	351,900
1981	5.3	373,300
1982	6.9	506,600
1983	8.0	609,200

*in Civilian Labor Force

Source: TEC

Churches in middle-class suburban settings report with increasing frequency that requests for food assistance for families in their local communities are on the rise. The number of persons assisted by one Houston church located near NASA increased drastically from 63 in 1980 to over 800 in 1983, with only five of these being repeat clients. Those receiving assistance are neighbors to the church congregation; they are the typical American family. They are not eligible for Food Stamps but are hungry nonetheless. The church secretary reported that the most common statement she hears from these acceptably dressed, intact families is, "We're down to two days' supply of food and don't know what to do."

In his book, *The New American Poverty,* Michael Harrington cites Rudolph Penner, the Congressional Budget Office director during the Reagan Administration as saying that between 1978 and 1983 there was a dramatic increase "in the number of poor persons in young, two parent families." Many of these "new poor" are young families in which the head of the household is a semi-skilled or unskilled worker. Texas chooses to deny Aid to Families with Dependent Children Program (AFDC) payments to those needy families having both parents present in the home, although the federal government does provide the option for the state to grant this type of assistance. Consequently, the state limits its support to children having only one parent in the home. The AFDC Program was created to help American families through tough times and to provide emergency assistance when necessary. Yet, benefits offered under this program in Texas are quite restricted. The Texas AFDC monthly grant was raised in September of 1984 to $53 per person, but remains one of the lowest in the nation.

To qualify for the Food Stamp Program, a recipient may own a car with a market value up to $4,500 and have an additional $1,500 in cash assets. Since many of the "new poor" are formerly employed middle-class Americans with homes, cars, and some additional assets, they face the predicament of either depleting their savings account and selling their only possessions of value or going without regular food assistance. The fact that these families are homeowners further complicates their situation, making it difficult for them to relocate in order to seek gainful employment. These are the people who frequently must turn to the private sector for emergency assistance.

"Among the hundreds that have been helped in the three years we have been in operation, only a handful have requested help more than once. The people that come into the church are almost always women and children, while the man of the house waits in the car. The people are clean, adequately dressed and typify an American family to me. The women are often shy about coming into my office, and are prone to stand outside until asked to come in. They are eager to explain they have NEVER asked for this type of help before."

–church pantry coordinator, Houston

In Houston particularly, private sector agencies have suffered under the burden of the huge number of unemployed persons and households without regular income. This escalating need was highlighted in the Houston testimony of Don Johnson, director of Star of Hope Mission. Mr. Johnson cited that in 1983 the mission was serving 300 meals a day. One year later, they were serving up to 1,000 meals a day. An average of 900 new individuals per month were coming to the mission for food, and the population being served had shifted dramatically from 70% transient to 60% local Houston residents.

In response to the growing need for emergency assistance, the Texas Legislature in 1983 created the Temporary Emergency Relief Program (TERP). With an appropriation of $1.5 million in pure state dollars to be matched with funds from participating counties, TERP was designed to meet the most critical needs of food, shelter, clothing, and utility payments. Initial evaluation of the program indicates that the money was expedited immediately, particularly where natural disasters had occurred, and that 35% of the TERP funds were used for food and housing, while 58% paid utility bills. As of June 1984, 15,722 individuals statewide were assisted by the program and received an average of $34 each. Currently the legislative appropriation of the TERP program is quite limited, and if reauthorized and funded at an appropriate level, could do much to help the "new poor" families who are struggling to put food on their tables.

CHAPTER III
WE ARE NOT ADEQUATELY MEETING THE NEED FOR FOOD ASSISTANCE

The information presented in the previous two chapters provides evidence that the problem of hunger exists in Texas and has been growing significantly over the last three years. The limited resources and funds available for programs such as the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), the Nutrition Program for the Elderly, and the Temporary Emergency Relief Program (TERP) serve only a fraction of those persons eligible and in need of assistance, and persons most critically affected by hunger face a widening gap in services available to help them maintain an adequate diet.

Because of this, the burden to help people in need of food falls heavily on the private sector and the Food Stamp Program. In a statewide survey conducted by this committee, 1,893 providers of emergency food reported with striking regularity that they are not able to keep up with the growing demand for food. They cite serving nearly one million more persons statewide in 1983 than in 1980, and in Houston during that time period, the demand for emergency food assistance jumped by 1000%.

"We dispense food in our church seven days a week. On Christmas Eve, 1983, we served a meal to over 1,200 people in less than two hours."

–minister, Dallas

Verification of this growing need documents that an average of 70,000 requests for assistance statewide are received per month, and 20,000 must be turned away due to lack of resources. Because private sector emergency food providers depend largely on donations of food and money, their ability to provide assistance is inconsistent and varies significantly over time. It is not unusual for resources in the private sector to run dry periodically, especially when demand is high, or when other items, such as utility payments consume an increasingly larger share of emergency assistance funds.

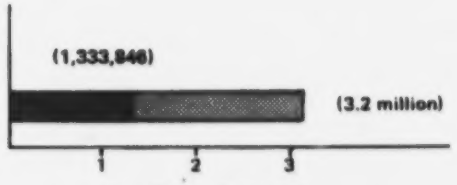
"The church cannot take over the problem of meeting hunger. . . . everytime I read the paper I hear people implying the churches can do it all. We are trying to fill the gaps, but that's all we can do."

–minister, Dallas

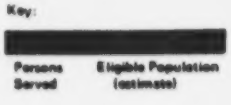
TDHR is often the first place citizens go when they need help. Those individuals and families who cannot obtain necessary immediate assistance from the Food Stamp Program generally then turn to the private sector for help. Private sector emergency food providers reported to this committee that 18% of those they served last year were waiting for Food Stamp benefits. In the Houston area, church leaders charge that they are overburdened with requests for food assistance and feel they are expected to serve as a "back up system" to the Food Stamp Program. In some areas of the state, such as the Beaumont region, TDHR staff have joined with local providers to develop ecumenical councils in response to the demand for emergency food, shelter, clothing, and utility assistance, and appropriate referrals are made for those who cannot legitimately be served by TDHR.

In light of the growing need for food assistance coupled with the short-term nature of most private sector services, it becomes even more imperative that the Food Stamp Program operate efficiently and effectively. As the nation's major weapon to combat hunger, this program should serve all those eligible persons who need assistance. The Texas Department of Human Resources (TDHR) estimates there are currently 3.2 million Texans eligible for Food Stamps, although on the average, only 1,333,846 received monthly benefits during FY 84.

FOOD STAMPS
Participation in Texas: FY 84



Source: TDHR



Many Texans are unable to obtain needed assistance from the Food Stamp Program as a result of several recent developments, primarily at the federal level. Regulations have been changed frequently; severe sanctions have been imposed against states for erroneous payment of benefits; and more stringent client reporting requirements cause delays in the timely receipt of benefits. Since the Reagan administration "tightened up" the program with the goal of reaching those in greatest need, the program has become notable for bureaucratic barriers that prevent or discourage eligible applicants from gaining public assistance. Testimony and case studies brought to the attention of this committee demonstrate that there are many Texans legitimately in need of and eligible for help who are not getting it.

"One of the primary messages I'm here to deliver is that the Food Stamp Program is not accessible to many of those who are legitimately eligible to receive the stamps. We have found ourselves serving as a back-up system to the Food Stamp Program. But, we are not able to serve the huge number of people referred to us by the TDHR offices."
–director, Houston Interfaith Hunger Coalition

In June of 1984, TDHR approved 69% of Food Stamp applications statewide, with approval rates ranging from 57.3% in the Austin region to a high of 79.3% in the Rio Grande Valley. Fifty-nine percent (59%) of TDHR's denials of Food Stamp benefits occur when applicants fail to provide verified information as required or they do not keep appointments.

A review of pertinent research indicates that nationwide one-third of all persons eligible for Food Stamps do not participate in the program. This is due most commonly to their lack of information about program eligibility. Many eligible persons know the program exists, but do not know that they, themselves, might qualify. Statistics made available by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) indicate that some of those eligible persons left out of the program have gross incomes below the poverty level; others are low-income working families, elderly persons, or disabled individuals whose net incomes fall below the poverty line after taxes and housing and medical expenses are paid. Those citizens with no prior link to public assistance programs are among the most likely to be neglected by the service delivery system.

"The total attitude of the Texas Department of Human Resources seems to be, when in doubt, deny applications for Food Stamps. When a family is without food for seven to ten days, the result can be devastating."
–county welfare director, Galveston

Barriers to participation by eligible clients have become most apparent relative to the expedited issuance of emergency Food Stamp benefits. The expedited issuance of Food Stamps is designed to help households whose need for food is urgent and who have very little income or liquid resources. During a time when requests for emergency food from the private sector have been escalating, the expedited issuance of Food Stamps in emergency situations has dropped significantly. In FY 83, 32% of all applicants for Food Stamps received expedited benefits, but in FY 84 only 17.8% received this form of emergency assistance. A wide variation in expedited issuance in FY 84 also existed among different regions of the state; El Paso provided emergency Food Stamps to 25% of all applicants and Houston served only 11.5%. The decrease in expedited issuance in the Houston region, alone, between FY 83 and FY 84 was 64%: this is notable during a time period when the demand for private sector help skyrocketed 1000%.

EXPEDITED ISSUANCE OF FOOD STAMPS
TEXAS: 1983 – 1984

	Total No. Food Stamp Applications	Total No. Expedited Issuances	% of Applicants Receiving Expedited Issuance
1983	565,697	179,808	32%
1984	529,463	94,248	17.8%

Source: TDHR

Public testimony at this committee's first public hearing in Houston in December of 1983 initially reported that requests for emergency food assistance often are not treated as urgent by TDHR Food Stamp staff. At subsequent public hearings witnesses repeatedly asserted that expedited issuance of Food Stamps is virtually non-existent in Texas.

TDHR does issue expedited Food Stamps but this process appears to fall far short of the actual need. TDHR reported that in FY 83 expedited benefits were issued to a monthly average of 14,984 cases and in FY 84 this fell to a monthly average of 7,854 cases. In 1980, TDHR and USDA jointly conducted a review of expedited Food Stamp procedures in Texas, determining that an average of 33% of applicant households were receiving the expedited benefits. However, the study also revealed that 37% of the households eligible for expedited service were not identified in the initial screening and that many cases were not handled in a timely fashion. In 1983, the number of applicant households receiving expedited service was roughly the same as in 1980, totaling 32% but by 1984, however, it had plummeted to 17.8%. This occurred at a time when private sector assistance had skyrocketed and survey respondents served close to two million persons.

Federal regulatory changes adopted in September of 1982 significantly tightened eligibility requirements for the expedited issuance of Food Stamps. Although a 25% decrease in caseload receiving expedited benefits in Texas was anticipated as a result of the federal modification, a 44% decline occurred between FY 1983 and FY 1984.

EXPEDITED ISSUANCE OF FOOD STAMPS BY STATE AND BY REGION
TEXAS: FY 83 and FY 84

Region No.	Geographic Area	% of Applicants Receiving Expedited Benefits: FY 83	% of Applicants Receiving Expedited Benefits: FY 84	% of Change
*	The State of Texas	32.0%	17.8%	–44.4%
1 & 2	Amarillo & Lubbock	43.4%	24.2%	–44.3%
3 & 12	El Paso & Midland	38.0%	24.9%	–34.5%
4	Abilene	30.0%	18.2%	–39.4%
5	Dallas	29.2%	16.7%	–42.9%
6	Austin	24.2%	15.1%	–37.6%
7	Paris	32.3%	21.2%	–34.4%
8	Edinburg	27.2%	17.3%	–36.4%
9	San Antonio	40.8%	23.3%	–42.9%
10	Beaumont	32.0%	20.9%	–34.7%
11	Houston	32.0%	11.5%	–64.0%

* The entire state

Source: TDHR

At the crux of the problem is the apparent inconsistency between departmental policy and actual program operation. TDHR officials have testified it is not the agency's intention to withhold emergency services from persons in dire need. According to the TDHR Food Stamp handbook, information on the availability of expedited service is to be given to all Food Stamp applicants. During the initial interview, the worker is directed to ask each applicant whether he or she has enough food in the household to survive for the time it takes from application to the receipt of the authorization card. If the answer is "no," the caseworker is then to determine whether the applicant meets the federally-established eligibility for expedited service. While there are specific eligibility guidelines, federal regulations stipulate that in order to expedite certification and issuance of emergency benefits the agency is required only to verify the applicant's identity and to make:

> *"Reasonable efforts to verify within the expedited processing standards, the household's residency, income statement, liquid resources, and all other factors required. . . . However, benefits shall not be delayed beyond the delivery standards solely because these eligibility factors have not been verified."*
>
> (*Federal Register*, February 17, 1984)

Despite the flexibility allowed under the federal guidelines, this committee has received numerous reports of applicants in immediate need, having no food at home, who were not informed of the availability of expedited services nor assisted in obtaining this form of assistance. Inadequacies in the issuance of expedited benefits and manual ATP's may be due to poor management, an insufficient number of caseworkers, complex and frequently changing regulations, and the limited time available for overburdened caseworkers to respond appropriately and effectively to emergency requests. In short, a combination of factors appear to have resulted in the practice of discouraging the issuance of expedited food stamps, further compounding the difficulties faced by Texans needing emergency food assistance.

Because many Food Stamp workers apparently do not clearly understand the department's program rules, they tend to be reluctant to approve expedited benefits. Their fear that errors may adversely affect their individual employee performance evaluations also may inappropriately restrict expedited issuance. In TDHR's Houston region, for example, each worker is allowed no more than six errors per year as part of a "progressive discipline system" and issuance decisions are inevitably affected by these pressures. Some workers mistakenly assume that all errors in expedited cases are counted against the state's payment error rate, when in fact, the state is not penalized for errors due to postment of eligibility verification in expedited cases. This exception was detailed in the *Federal Register*, of February 17, 1984 as follows:

> Variances excluded from error analysis.
>
> *"The following variances shall be excluded from the determination of a household's eligibility and basis of issuance for the sample month: any variance in cases certified under expedited certification procedures resulting from postponed verification of an element of eligibility. Verification of gross income, deductions, resources, household composition, alien status or tax dependency may be postponed for cases eligible for expedited certification."*

Federal regulations require TDHR to act on a household's request for expedited issuance of Food Stamp benefits within five days of the date of application. The state agency then has an additional two days to mail the Food Stamps to those applicants found to be eligible. In emergency situations TDHR staff may issue a manual ATP (Authorization-to-Purchase) card which enables the recipient to purchase Food Stamps immediately. In addition to expedited cases, manual ATP cards are useful in other circumstances, such as the replacement of lost stamps. In FY 83, TDHR issued 559,176 manual ATP's statewide, but in 1984, this number fell to 429,898. Statewide in FY 84, 21.9% of the manual ATP's issued were for the immediate issuance of emergency benefits. In TDHR's Houston region, the harshest complaints of the agency's failure to grant emergency benefits have been heard and in that region only 11.5% of the manual ATP's were issued for expedited services.

"Ms. J. applied for expedited food stamps for herself and her four children on November 15, 1983. She was delayed and finally certified 30 days later: a time period six times the required five days within which to deliver an authorization-to-purchase (ATP) card."

–legal complaint, Houston

One county welfare director testified before this committee that she had not seen a manual ATP "in years," although the need for emergency assistance had grown to alarming proportions in her area. She

cited an increasing demand for local and private agencies to provide emergency services to Food Stamp applicants during the eligibility determination process. Even in cases where Food Stamps were lost, this witness reported that clients were required to wait several days for authorization to arrive by mail from the central office in Austin, when manual ATP's could have been issued right on the spot.

In an effort to save administrative costs, reduce errors, and to cut down on fraud, the federal government adopted in 1981 requirements for states to comply with new monthly reporting and retrospective budgeting (MRRB) procedures. MRRB is a system which requires certain Food Stamp households to report changes in income and household circumstances each month in order to reaffirm their eligibility for benefits. According to TDHR, 27.5% of the Food Stamp caseload in Texas submitted monthly status reports in FY 84.

A monthly report that is not completed properly or received on time can result in the termination of a household's benefits. Agency estimates of numbers of clients denied benefits due to monthly reporting problems vary. TDHR reports that 6% of those required to report monthly are denied benefits for failure to file a timely and complete report. A witness submitted as testimony to this committee a letter from TDHR's commissioner stating that "statistics indicate that in the period July to December 1983 approximately 20% of the monthly reporting caseload was denied monthly because of monthly reporting. Of the denied cases many are subsequently reinstated." According to the agency, benefits are restored to 32% after reporting problems have been rectified.

Some Food Stamp clients complain that TDHR does not initially provide recipients with information on the proper and accurate completion of the reporting form. Forms are difficult for some clients to understand and complicated to fill out. Community groups point out that children often fill out the forms for their parents, especially in households where a language other than English is primarily spoken and where adults may not read and write English well.

Monthly reporting has intensified the burden of "red tape" on the state and on the client. Monthly report forms sometimes reach clients the day before they are due back at TDHR, and some clients state that denials of benefits occur despite the timely completion and return of the paperwork. Increased administrative responsibilities imposed on TDHR by this system have caused intra-agency delays. For example, in the Houston region, a backlog of completed monthly reports await entry into the computer; frustrated clients document with TDHR receipts their submitting of monthly reports, but the reports have yet to reach the clients' caseworkers. Even when it is verified that the agency has unjustly delayed or mistakenly denied benefits, clients report that manual ATP's are not always issued to compensate. Because Food Stamp recipients whose benefits are terminated due to monthly reporting problems reapply, with many being reinstated, the monthly reporting system has actually resulted in additional and unnecessary administrative costs to the state. TDHR officials label MRRB as a "nightmare" for the agency and those clients required to participate.

According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, four states (Colorado, Michigan, New York, and Illinois) have done extensive analyses on the efficiency of MRRB. Findings in New York indicate that there were no reductions in benefit payments due to MRRB, while the Michigan study showed only a slight payment savings. But in all cases the administrative costs of MRRB significantly exceeded the amount saved in benefit payments. Large numbers of those participants who were terminated for failing to meet monthly reporting requirements (over 93% in Michigan) turned out to be households who were otherwise eligible and needy. The re-application of households inappropriately terminated because of MRRB also added to overall administrative costs. Thirty-six per cent of those terminated in Michigan were eligible households who lost their benefits altogether because they failed to reapply or who lost their benefits for an average of two months because they did not reapply immediately. Overall, research by the Center shows that monthly reporting systems do not produce a significant amount of savings or a substantial error rate reduction.

Recent food stamp legislation makes it more financially practical for states to seek waivers from USDA to restrict the categories of households required to report monthly. Under legislation (H.R. 4252) passed by Congress on November 18, 1983, states have additional flexibility to seek waivers of monthly reporting requirements within the Food Stamp Program. While 27.5% of the Food Stamp caseload currently reports monthly in Texas, twelve states have received USDA waivers whereby clients required to submit monthly reports total less than 10%. This committee encourages TDHR to pursue appropriate waivers which may now be available in order to minimize the administrative burdens brought about by the monthly reporting system.

STATES IN WHICH LESS THAN 10% OF NON–PUBLIC ASSISTANCE CASELOAD IS REQUIRED TO SUBMIT MONTHLY REPORTS

State	% of Monthly Reporters
Alabama	4.7%
Georgia	9.4%
North Carolina	9.9%
South Carolina	6.5%
Tennessee	3.7%
Virginia	9.8%
West Virginia	8.1%
Connecticut	6.3%
Massachusetts	3.7%
New Hampshire	7.3%
Rhode Island	1.9%
Vermont	5.5%

Source: USDA

Testimony before this committee has also outlined the lack of and misinformation given to applicants by TDHR staff. Oftentimes an applicant is not aware of the range of information items that will be required to adequately verify eligibility to receive benefits. Some items may be easily accessible to the client while others can be costly. Employment records and birth certificates are items frequently requested of applicants, who must expend limited funds to obtain these items. Applicants may also be forced to wait for these items of verification to be processed by the respective agencies that issue them.

The restaurant manager called the caseworker at TDHR to verify my son's employment, but TDHR refused the verification stating that a W-2 form was needed."
–Food Stamp applicant, Galveston

In addition, the extensiveness of verification differs among regions; what constitutes adequate verification in one region may be considered insufficient in another. The inflexibility of appointment scheduling and office hours of operation and requirement for over-verification of information tend to discourage applicants from completing the application process. While caseworkers are responsible to assist an applicant in obtaining sufficient verification, public testimony received by this committee indicates few caseworkers actually have the time to do so. Clients report a never-ending battle trying to reach caseworkers on the phone to provide additional requested information, and there are those who complain of not being able to find a TDHR staff person responsible to handle their case when a worker goes on vacation.

"We called TDHR. After being put on hold for two hours, someone answered. We gave our name and explained that we had turned in our papers and would like to know what happened. She put us back on hold saying she would check on it. We held for another ten minutes. Then someone else came on the line and asked if we were being helped. We said yes and gave the woman's name. He replied that she had gone to lunch and hung up on us! We called back and were told our file was lost and that we would need to come back again and fill out the papers."
–Food Stamp applicant, Houston

The client's ability to verify information and keep appointments may also be compromised by lack of transportation, problems with childcare, absence of a telephone, and language barriers. Undependable public transportation, a car breaking down and lack of cash to pay for gasoline considerably affect an applicant's ability to get to and from the Food Stamp office, particularly in rural areas. Additionally, TDHR offices operate during regular business hours, which discourages working people from applying for help. This problem was noted in the recent report of the President's Task Force on Food Assistance, which recommended that food stamp offices be open during non-business hours in order to encourage applicants to work.

Reports from throughout the state indicate a general need for improved methods of communication between TDHR staff and program applicants and clients. Rude and adversarial relationships may develop between caseworkers and client. This may result from the fact that TDHR staff have not been exempt from the increasing demand for information and over-verification stemming from the federal government's regulation of the program. The provision of services has become increasingly difficult due to

complex changes in policy, increasing workloads and a more stringent demand for improved accuracy in the distribution of benefits. Testimony before this committee cites that after new federal requirements went into effect, the average time spent interviewing a Food Stamp applicant jumped from 40 to 75 minutes. Caseworkers are often expected to see the same number of clients per day as when the interview time was only 40 minutes per client. It has been cited with increasing regularity that caseworkers must take work home and work on lunch hours in order to complete their cases in a timely manner.

In the Houston-Galveston region, TDHR regional administration instituted a "progressive discipline system" in March of 1983 in order to promote case accuracy. The new system requires that a caseworker make not more than six payment errors in a year (out of hundreds of cases), otherwise he or she is subject to probation or discharge. Caseworkers picketed TDHR offices in Houston on September 28, 1983 in order to oppose the increased workload, the increased complexity of federal regulations, and the increased stress of the job.

By working within an already-existing program to increase effectiveness and efficiency of program operations, the Texas Department of Human Resources (TDHR) has the potential to make improvements in the administration of the Food Stamp Program that will enable the state to better serve those citizens legitimately in need of food assistance.

"While in the process of making an application for food stamps, Ms. A., my caseworker requested that I furnish her with the deed to my mother-in-law's house, who is deceased. My husband is ill with cancer and my seven week old child is also ill and not expected to survive. Due to my husband's illness we were living in my mother-in-law's home. We have no income and my husband has been denied SSI, but has it in appeal. Ms. A informed me that before I can become eligible for assistance I must furnish her with the deed to my mother-in-law's home, the baby's social security number and other information that has been difficult. My need for an income and food is necessary now, but I could not get expedited stamps to feed my family without the deed and other information she requested."

–Ms. J., Expedited Food Stamp applicant, Houston

CHAPTER IV

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN

RECOMMENDATION

That the Legislature appropriate $12 million in supplemental state funds to expand the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), which currently is fully funded by the federal government.

RATIONALE

The WIC Program provides food assistance and nutrition education to low-income pregnant women, new mothers, and children under age five who are determined to be at nutritional risk due to high-risk pregnancy, iron deficiency, inadequate pattern of growth, and inadequate dietary intake. Numerous evaluations of the program have documented its effectiveness in improving nutritional status, reducing iron deficiencies, and improving pregnancy outcomes. A 1979 review of WIC conducted by the Harvard School of Public Health also noted the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of the program by concluding that for every dollar spent on WIC, $3 was saved in later medical costs. All of society pays for the rise in health problems caused by undernutrition. On the average, it costs $15,000 in hospitalization costs to bring one low birth weight infant to normal weight.

Pregnant women, infants, and young children are at periods of rapid growth in their life cycle, and therefore at great risk of long-term health consequences due to inadequate nutrition. In Texas, a survey conducted in February of 1984 among more than 1,300 WIC participants in the state of Texas revealed that 55% of the mothers and 35% of the children were skipping meals due to a lack of money to buy sufficient food. Thirty-eight percent (38%) said that they did not have enough money the previous month to buy food.

In 1984, the Texas Department of Health reports that 814,177 women, infants, and children are potentially eligible for the program. Of those, 78% or 634,213 are *not* served due to the capping of federal funds granted to Texas at the FY 85 level of $89 million. Current participation in the program is thereby limited, and in Houston, alone, only 9% of those in need are being served. Currently, 91 Texas counties are not participating in the program.

Implementation of the committee's recommendation would increase by 30,000 the number of pregnant women, infants, and children being served by the WIC program. The Texas Health and Human Services Coordinating Council and the Task Force on Indigent Health Care have noted the importance of providing adequate nutritional services and nutrition education to pregnant women, new mothers, infants, and children in order to decrease long-term healthcare costs, and each has made related recommendations to support these efforts.

Secondary benefits of the program also accrue to Texas marketers, grocers, and vendors who redeem WIC food vouchers for cash. In 1983, the WIC program added $51 million to the state and local economies.

CONGREGATE AND HOME-DELIVERED MEALS FOR SENIORS

RECOMMENDATION

That the Legislature appropriate sufficient funds to the Texas Department on Aging (TDoA) to provide home-delivered meals to an increased number of needy elderly persons.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Legislature approve through Level IV the budget request submitted by the Texas Department on Aging (TDoA) for expansion of congregate and home-delivered meals for elderly Texans.

RATIONALE

The elderly constitute one of the fastest growing segments of the Texas population, and are at great risk of serious health consequences due to inadequate dietary intake. The number of elderly women over age 70 is increasing at the greatest rate, many of whom are homebound due to impairments, illness, and overall frailty. Currently in Texas, almost one million elderly persons live near poverty, and lack of disposable income is cited as the major cause of hunger among this target population.

Results from a statewide survey jointly conducted by this committee and the Texas Department on Aging indicate that in addition to those already receiving home-delivered meals, there are at least 22,138 elderly persons in Texas in need of that service. Many senior meal programs throughout the state report chronically long waiting lists for home-delivered meals, and directors of the state's 28 Area Agencies on Aging, who work on the local level delivering services to the elderly, believe this number severely underestimates the true need.

"Those who deliver to the home of isolated elderly become familiar with empty refrigerators."
–Houston nutrition project director

Of the home-delivered meal recipients who responded to the survey, 68% indicated that meal was their only complete meal of the day and 63% said they would go hungry if they didn't receive the meal service. Unless the minimum basic nutritional needs of the elderly are met, the state will run the risk of paying higher costs for institutionalization of those elderly persons not able to be cared for at home. The initiation of new Medicare cost-containment measures is also expected to increase the number of elderly needing home-delivered meals as a result of being sent home earlier following hospital stays.

On the average homebound elderly clients annually receive 57 meals, indicating the need is generally one for short-term assistance. Over the next biennium, $5.6 million would be required to meet the growing need for meals by these homebound elderly persons. The Texas Department on Aging (TDoA) has already requested in their Level IV budget $1.2 million towards meeting this need. This committee supports the Level IV budget request by TDoA and believes that the 69th Legislature should appropriate the additional funds necessary to address the need for home-delivered meals among our elderly citizens.

TDoA already receives the maximum federal grant for Title III nutrition funding for congregate and home-delivered meals, and pooled local resources in 1984 contributed an additional $5 million dollars to the program budget. The Long-Term Care Coordinating Council has also identified the delivery of nutrition services and homecare to the frail and impaired elderly as a critical issue facing the state.

TEMPORARY EMERGENCY RELIEF PROGRAM

RECOMMENDATION

That the Legislature reauthorize the Temporary Emergency Relief Program, (TERP), to continue under the administration of the Texas Department of Human Resources, through enactment of enabling legislation and appropriation of state funds. Funding for the program should be increased to at least the $5 million authorized in the original Act, and if at all possible, to an even more adequate level. In drafting the new legislation, consideration should be given to incorporating modifications which will be recommended by the Legislative Review Committee currently monitoring the program.

RATIONALE

In response to drastic increases in requests for emergency services to meet basic daily needs, the Temporary Emergency Relief Program (TERP) was created by the Texas Legislature in 1983. The initial legislation authorized the program for one biennium and established a Legislative Review Committee to monitor its implementation. The TERP program has successfully demonstrated its effectiveness as a partnership between the public and private sectors, and the demand for this type of service continues to exist in Texas. Data collected by this commmittee, particularly the survey of private sector emergency

food assistance providers, as well as testimony presented during statewide public hearings, consistently pointed to a growing need for emergency food, particularly for those unemployed Texans who do not qualify to receive Food Stamp benefits.

Because of the administrative flexibility and minimal bureaucratic "red tape" built into the program, TERP has been used by local governments and providers to address whatever needs appear most critical in their communities. The major criticisms voiced about the program have concerned the limited funding appropriated by the Legislature. As of June, 1984, there were 15,722 persons given assistance through the TERP program. Due to the significant documentation of ongoing need, this committee strongly urges that increased funding be included in the program's reauthorization.

Federal programs of this type have proven to be insufficient to meet the need alone, and are somewhat inconsistent and unpredictable with regard to regulations, restrictions, and appropriations. TERP continues to be unique in its approach, facilitating the delivery of direct services to those most in need, and this committee believes its reauthorization accompanied by additional funding is vital to the emergency food assistance network in Texas.

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS: LEGISLATIVE AUTHORIZATION

RECOMMENDATION

That the Texas Legislature amend the Human Resources Code to authorize and mandate participation in the federal program providing interim assistance to applicants for Supplemental Security Income, general assistance for the medically disabled, and adult social services for aged, blind, and disabled persons, and in the federal program providing emergency services to needy families with children.

RATIONALE

Although two emergency assistance programs providing federal matching funds are currently open to state participation, Texas has not yet opted to participate. This committee believes these programs could help alleviate the overburdening of private emergency assistance sources, allowing them to target persons who have no other avenue through which to obtain services.

Under the federal enabling statute for Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), emergency assistance can be provided to needy families with children. The assistance may be directed to AFDC applicants but is not restricted to them, since any needy family with children can apply for the emergency payments. However, a family can receive these benefits only one time in any twelve-month period. The eligibility guidelines are somewhat more flexible than for the ongoing AFDC program, and there is an option to cover special populations, such as migrant workers. Under the emergency assistance provisions, the federal government pays 50% of the administrative costs, while the usual AFDC match applies to the actual benefits paid.

The statute governing the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program includes a provision for 100% federal reinbursement to states offering interim assistance payments to SSI applicants. The interim assistance benefits are provided by the state to applicants who seemed to have a high probability of being eligible for SSI. These payments made during the eligibility determination process are 100% reimbursable to the state once an applicant is ultimately found to qualify for the federal program.

State, local, and private agencies are already providing some services, without the federal match, to many of those who would be covered under these emergency and interim assistance programs, since these individuals are among the most needy in our state. At a time when resources are scarce and the demand is great, this committee believes the state should take full advantage of available funding sources appropriate to address emergency needs in Texas.

AID TO FAMILIES WITH DEPENDENT CHILDREN (AFDC)

RECOMMENDATION

That the Legislature continue its efforts to raise AFDC monthly payments to level more reasonably adequate to meet recipients' needs.

RECOMMENDATION

That serious consideration should be given to adding an AFDC-U component to the program to serve unemployed families with two parents in the household, and to eliminate the state's indirect encouragement of families to break up in order to receive assistance.

RATIONALE

Historically, payments to recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children in Texas have been

among the lowest in the nation. Until very recently, the benefits were calculated based on the 1969 poverty index. Total payments were limited by specific dollar figure in the state Constitution, and this article had to be amended every few years in order to keep up with inflation.

Several important changes have been made in Texas' AFDC Program during the past several years. Up-to-date poverty figures are now being applied. In 1982, Texas voters approved a constitutional amendment to authorize spending up to 1% of the state's budget on AFDC. Currently, this ceiling would allow a maximum of $80 per monthly grant. In 1981, the Texas Legislature raised AFDC payments from $43 to $48 per month and authorized the Board of Human Resources to increase the payment level above that amount if funds become available during the 1984-85 biennium. Under this legislative authorization, the board has now raised AFDC payments to $53 per month.

Additionally, the program will be expanded in 1985 to include prenatal care for pregnant women who will meet AFDC qualifications when they deliver, as well as pregnant women in two-parent households otherwise living within AFDC eligibility guidelines. Another significant change approved by the TDHR board will allow Medicaid coverage for children living in two-parent households otherwise qualifying for the program. The department estimates that this will result in medical care for approximately 100,000 children in addition to the 225,000 already participating in the AFDC program. It is believed that the extension of prenatal care will be tremendously helpful as a preventive measure, ensuring healthier infants and children within the AFDC population. The lack of adequate health care among poverty-level families, and particularly their children, is a serious concern in the U.S. Of the 700,000 children cut from AFDC and Medicaid by federal budget cuts in 1981, an estimated 44% had no health insurance. At least now, children whose families are intact can receive health services which are so crucial during the early years of development.

EMERGENCY AND EXPEDITED ISSUANCE OF FOOD STAMP BENEFITS

RECOMMENDATION

That the Texas Department of Human Resources (TDHR) carefully monitor on a statewide basis the expedited issuance of food stamp benefits in order to assure that all regions are in compliance with federal regulations and that eligible households are identified and processed in a timely fashion.

RECOMMENDATION

That TDHR carefully evaluate and modify, as necessary, the screening procedures used to identify households eligible for expedited benefits in order to assure that those households eligible and in need of assistance receive benefits.

RECOMMENDATION

That TDHR clearly outline for agency staff that errors in expedited issuance due to postponement of information verification do not count in the determination of the state's payment error rate. TDHR should also make a note of this in the Food Stamp manual in the area on "Expedited Service."

RECOMMENDATION

That the Legislature mandate TDHR to issue manual Authorization to Purchase (ATP's) in situations where Food Stamps have been lost, when ATP and Identification numbers do not match, and other specified cases of immediate need.

RECOMMENDATION

That Texas Department of Human Resources staff make appropriate referrals to local churches and community agencies of those Food Stamp applicants in need of immediate food assistance and unable to receive timely help. The Department should work cooperatively with these local organizations to develop an effective referral system and establish ecumenical councils to meet emergency needs. One successful model program of this type has already been established through the efforts of a TDHR volunteer specialist in the Beaumont area.

RATIONALE

The exponential growth in the need for emergency food is best confirmed by this committee's statewide survey among 1,893 churches, the Salvation Army, and other groups. Respondents reported serving 1,874,672 persons in 1983; a substantial increase over the 889,303 served in 1980. Of approximately 70,000 requests for emergency food received each month, 20,000 must be turned away due to a lack of resources in the private sector.

The apparent lack of expedited issuance of Food Stamps places households in need of emergency food under significant hardship. The dramatic 44% decrease in the expedited issuance of Food Stamp benefits in Texas between 1983 and 1984 strongly suggests that the state is being more restrictive than the federal regulations require. Overly restrictive is-

suance of expedited benefits may be due to ineffective screening procedures, excessive administrative burdens on TDHR staff, and an erroneous belief among Food Stamp caseworkers that all errors in expedited cases are counted in the State's payment error rate.

A 1980 study of expedited issuance of Food Stamps conducted jointly by TDHR and USDA concluded that 37% of cases eligible for expedited issuance of benefits were not identified in the screening process. Testimony heard throughout the state and analysis of data on the expedited issuance of Food Stamps in Texas leads this committee to believe that this problem still exists. Private sector emergency food providers report that statewide an average of 18% of those they help are waiting for Food Stamp benefits to arrive.

The issuance of expedited benefits to ineligible households, and the over issuance of benefits due to postponement of verification of select items of information, such as income, do not count in the state's error rate, and therefore do not affect the state's fiscal liability. Fear of error rate sanctions due to expedited issuance therefore should not affect a caseworker's eligibility determination process nor cause TDHR to be overly restrictive in the issuance of expedited benefits.

In cases of immediate need, where a delay or incorrect termination of benefits is due to agency error, TDHR should be required to issue immediate assistance in the form of manual Authorization-to-Purchase (ATP) cards. Replacement of lost stamps is reported to be painfully slow, and those clients facing a food emergency may not always be able to wait for computer-issued ATP's that can take up to ten days.

Many people, whether eligible or not for Food Stamps benefits, first turn so TDHR for help in a situation of need. The department should make referrals when appropriate to community-based food providers so that no Texan goes hungry due to lack of information about where to go for help. At a time when the need for emergency food is so great, and there are large numbers of unemployed Texans ineligible for Food Stamps for reasons such as having a car valued in excess of the Food Stamp eligibility criteria, it is incumbent on the agency to work cooperatively with local public agencies and private groups to effectively address the problem of hunger in this state.

MONTHLY REPORTING FOR THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM

RECOMMENDATION

That the Texas Department of Human Resources (TDHR) request client Monthly Reporting and Retrospective Budgeting (MRRB) waivers from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to reduce to less than 10% the proportion of the Food Stamp caseload required to report.

RECOMMENDATION

That TDHR develop more careful screening procedures for determining which clients should be required to file monthly status reports in order to decrease the erroneous issuance of monthly reporting forms to exempt clients.

RATIONALE

Twelve states have been granted USDA waivers whereby less than 10% of the Food Stamp caseload is required to file monthly reports (see chart, Chapter III). In Texas, according to TDHR, 27.5% of the caseload is subject to MRRB in 1984. This committee has also heard testimony that Food Stamp clients actually exempt from MRRB have been erroneously required to submit monthly reports to TDHR.

The Texas Department of Human Resources reports that each month six per cent of the Food Stamp households in Texas are terminated from the program due to problems with monthly reporting. Department officials point out that MRRB places hardship on clients who are not used to dealing with such technical forms and increases the administrative burden on the state agency. Evaluations of MRRB in Illinois and Massachussetts have concluded that the reporting system increases administrative costs and does not reduce the state's error rate for incorrect issuance or over-issuance of benefits.

TDHR should make efforts to reduce substantially the proportion of the Food Stamp caseload required to submit monthly reports. A federal statutory change enacted in November of 1983 allows the USDA to grant waivers to states for exempting up to 95% of the caseload. This type of waiver could help to significantly decrease the current administrative burden on both clients and TDHR staff.

FOOD STAMP INFORMATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

RECOMMENDATION

That the Texas Department of Human Resources (TDHR) adopt uniform practices for use in all regions regarding the verification of information required in the Food Stamp application process. Costs incurred by the applicants should be minimized as much as possible, and emphasis should be placed on developing information verification requirements which are not excessive nor unfair to applicants.

RECOMMENDATION

That TDHR develop information materials regarding general Food Stamp eligibility guidelines and the application procedure, noting the specific items needed to verify a claim for benefits and the availability of expedited issuance in emergency situations. TDHR should make the materials available to potential applicants through community-based organizations and agencies likely to have contact with those individuals and families.

RECOMMENDATION

That TDHR conduct a pilot project to develop informational materials and worksheets and to provide training to volunteers and advocates working with the elderly who could do preliminary screening and disseminate information on Food Stamp eligibility. This could be accomplished through training workshops held in cooperation with the 28 statewide Area Agencies on Aging where case aides, social workers and others would learn to help older citizens determine whether they are potentially eligible for Food Stamps.

RECOMMENDATION

That TDHR be required to assist, on request, applicants in filling out and completing the application procedures and inform them of the availability of this type of assistance.

RECOMMENDATION

That TDHR designate a specific office in each of its regions, to handle complaints relating to Food Stamps. Information regarding this regional office and its functions should be included in materials distributed to applicants and to community-based agencies and organizations which are often called on to intervene when complaints arise about the program.

RECOMMENDATION

That TDHR have the responsibility to initiate and coordinate information and referral services among public and private resources at the local level. This may include "hot lines" to refer needy individuals to local food pantries able to offer assistance at the time of a call.

RATIONALE

Inadequate verification of information is a major reason for the denial of benefits to Food Stamp applicants. Clients may be required to complete an extensive process of documentation and verification that is often not clearly defined and may be costly. In order to obtain documents required for verification, clients may be forced to expend funds which are already severely limited. Testimony and information presented to this committee indicate that the means used to verify information in one region may not necessarily be considered adequate in another. This creates an inequality in the accessibility of benefits to applicants across the state. A consistent and fair statewide department policy on information verification could help alleviate many of these problems.

While many eligible people know that a Food Stamp program exists, research released by the USDA indicates that as much as ⅓ of those eligible for benefits do *not* know that they qualify. In the elderly population, as many as 50% of those eligible for assistance do not know they can receive help.

Elderly persons are at great risk of serious health consequences due to inadequate dietary intake. Census data and population statistics indicate that nearly one million elderly persons in Texas live close to the poverty line. In 1984, 10.8% of the population receiving Food Stamp benefits were over the age of 60.

An information program targeted to outlining clearly the eligibility requirements for Food Stamps and the information required of applicants could greatly increase the number of Texans who receive Food Stamps. This type of program could also decrease the number of applicants who get all or partway through the system before realizing they don't have the necessary information with them at the time of application. A pilot program to train those who work specifically with the elderly to disseminate information and to do pre-screening of potential applicants would help to reach many older Texans needing food assistance. The dissemination of clear information along with pilot pre-screening procedures could be evaluated for effectiveness in cutting down error rates associated with those cases.

With regard to the general Food Stamp application procedure, many people experience great difficulty filling out long involved forms and obtaining verification of information. Illiteracy is one major reason that may account for these problems. Volunteer specialists should be on staff in every region to facilitate assistance in completing the application process. Problems related to application procedures and misinformation are recognized by USDA, which is now conducting a pilot public education project in Maryland to correct errors due to lack of, misinterpretation or misrepresentation of information.

While TDHR has a statewide hotline for calls concerning Food Stamps, many report that they can't get through. Although regional offices handle complaints as well, there is little awareness among clients that they can seek recourse for problems and complaints through a regional office. The existence of a complaint coordinator in each region must be made better known to clients and applicants through informational materials and the applicant interview process.

NUTRITION EDUCATION ASSOCIATED WITH THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM

RECOMMENDATION

That the Texas Department of Human Resources (TDHR) develop and disseminate nutrition education materials to all recipients of Food Stamp benefits. This should include written materials for home use as well as media education efforts designed to make the best use of waiting time at TDHR offices.

RATIONALE

In order to maximize the effectiveness of the Food Stamp program in alleviating hunger and malnutrition, the Texas Department of Human Resources should develop and disseminate nutrition education materials to all program participants. Basic components should include the elements of sound nutrition, menu planning, food preparation, and budgeting. This may be done in cooperation with the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, the Nutrition Education and Training Program and the Texas Dietetic Association. The information materials should be developed with the goal of preventing nutrition-related diseases, improving the nutritional status of Texans, combatting nutrition misinformation and providing clients with information on how to gain maximum nutrition and health benefits from Food Stamp purchases.

FOOD STAMP OFFICE HOURS

RECOMMENDATION

That the Texas Department of Human Resources (TDHR) pilot, in both rural and urban settings, the expansion of operating hours for Food Stamp offices to include non-business hours, such as 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m.

RATIONALE

TDHR should keep Food Stamp offices open during non-business hours in order to provide flexibility for those applicants and clients who work. Current office hours do not provide an incentive for people to work and can in fact discourage those working people in need of assistance from applying for Food Stamps. The report of the President's Task Force on Food Assistance mentioned this as a problem, but fell short of recommending specific federal action.

WORKER-ORIENTED ISSUES IN THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM

RECOMMENDATION

That the Texas Department of Human Resources (TDHR) establish an ongoing technical advisory committee for its Food Stamp Program, to be composed of at least one Food Stamp worker from each region. The committee would give feedback and make recommendations to TDHR administrators regarding improvements in program operations.

RECOMMENDATION

That TDHR develop and implement strategies for incorporating a more "client-based" approach in training Food Stamp workers and should continue to seek ways to reduce errors through effective caseworker training.

RECOMMENDATION

That TDHR initiate efforts to recruit and hire more Spanish-speaking workers in its Food Stamp program, particularly targeting those areas of the state experiencing a high percentage of Spanish-speaking Food Stamp applicants and recipients and areas where a shortage has been noted.

RECOMMENDATION

That TDHR pilot a case management system for Food Stamp recipients to explore other service options for which they may be eligible and to make referrals to appropriate programs within TDHR and other agencies.

RATIONALE

In a system as complex as the Food Stamp program, the creation of an advisory committee of Food Stamp workers would provide functional recommendations to help streamline application procedures cut down on error rates and enhance worker productivity. Feedback could address the effectiveness and efficiency of program procedures such as scheduling, screening, information verification and overall case management. An advisory committee of this type currently exists for the Community Care for Aged and Disabled program within TDHR. This type of committee for the Food Stamp Program is highly recommended.

In public hearings throughout the state, testimony has been received regarding communication problems and difficulties between clients and TDHR staff. Examples of such difficulties include the dissemination of incorrect and incomplete information and insensitivity. The increased caseload borne by workers, expanded length of each interview due to changes in federal regulations, and fear of errors and lack of clarity regarding eligibility criteria tends to create a situation where the worker tends to err more away from the client's needs. In situations where caseworkers would be expected by federal law to assist an applicant in obtaining appropriate verification of information to complete the Food Stamp application process, many caseworkers literally do not have enough time. The implementation of a more "client-based" approach in the training of Food Stamp workers, as well as an increased efficiency in application procedures, would succeed in alleviating many of the complaints brought to the attention of this committee.

Similarly, complaints about the lack of an adequate number of Spanish-speaking workers could be resolved if TDHR would initiate a more concerted effort to recruit and hire Spanish-speaking workers. At a public hearing in Houston, witnesses charged that the department did not have an adequate number of bilingual workers, and produced TDHR forms stating that the applicant would "need to bring an interpreter" to the interview.

On a pilot basis, TDHR should explore ways to refer Food Stamp applicants to other assistance programs for which they are likely to be eligible. Currently in some areas of the state, there is a joint application procedure for Food Stamps and AFDC. Many Food Stamp participants who receive benefits from other assistance programs have undergone several interviews and application procedures. This ultimately places an increasing administrative burden on the agency to operate efficiently and effectively. Referrals to programs both within TDHR and outside the agency would ease some of the difficulties potential applicants have in trying to negotiate their way through such a fragmented system.

AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES PROGRAM

RECOMMENDATION

That the Texas Department of Human Resources (TDHR) seek from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) an expansion of the supply of limited availability items, such as honey, cornmeal, and non-fat dry milk.

RECOMMENDATION

That TDHR actively enroll county and city governments in assisting with the transportation, storage, and distribution of commodity items.

RECOMMENDATION

That TDHR do a study to explore further reimbursement of transportation, storage, and distribution costs to those contractors who legitimately cannot operate the program within the current federal reimbursement limits of 5% for such activities.

RECOMMENDATION

That TDHR create a Contractor Advisory Committee to assist in the evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of program policies and procedures.

RECOMMENDATION

That TDHR adopt a yearly certification process for those households eligible for the receipt of commodity items.

RECOMMENDATION

That TDHR initiate a pilot project that would provide home visitors working in the Community Care, Primary Care, and Homemaker programs with the materials and training to certify homebound clients to receive commodity items. Workers should also deliver such items to those homebound clients. Such a pilot program could be coordinated with the pilot program mentioned earlier to enroll homebound elderly in the Food Stamp program.

RATIONALE

Increased availability and distribution of limited supply items, such as honey and non-fat dry milk, will be a boon to those citizens who wait in line, sometimes for many hours, to receive cheese and

butter from the commodity distribution program. Currently counties receive limited supply items on a rotation basis, while some counties do not receive these items at all due to constraints associated with the reimbursement policies for transportation, storage and distribution. In those areas where county and city governments can provide in-kind assistance with transportation, storage and distribution, a contractor may be able to operate the program within the 5% reimbursement limit. But, for those food banks and community action agencies who do not have adequate local governmental assistance, the costs of operating the program may be prohibitive. This can be best illustrated with an item, such as cornmeal, whose value is .1615¢ per pound, but which requires a great deal of space to transport and store. At the current reimbursement rate of 5% of the item's total value to cover transportation, storage, and distribution costs, the private sector contractor's costs may legitimately exceed the reimbursement rate and therefore be a disincentive for operating the program.

The commodity program is known for its proliferation of paperwork, including quarterly certification procedures for receipt of food items. An annual certification procedure has been recommended at TDHR in order to streamline program administration. This committee supports the adoption of yearly certification procedures and further recommends that TDHR create a Contractor Advisory Committee. The advisory committee would provide ongoing feedback to agency staff to evaluate program policies and procedures and assure maximum efficiency while also fulfilling federal requirements for accountability and record-keeping. While the department has held a series of workshops with contractors to develop the program handbook, this committee believes that an advisory group is necessary to provide ongoing evaluation of program policies and procedures.

The commodity distribution program depends heavily on the use of volunteers at the local level to distribute food. An excessive amount of paperwork can be a disincentive to maintaining the level of volunteer support necessary to run the program. A change in the current certification procedures from a quarterly to annual process can be accomplished without federal permission and need only be adopted by TDHR.

Homebound citizens are at a great disadvantage with regard to the receipt of commodity items due to their limited mobility. On a regular basis, recipients are required to arrive at a distribution site in order to pick up the commodity items, and this may often involve long waits. Homebound citizens can quite easily be certified for the receipt of commodities through home visitors from other programs administered by TDHR. TDHR should also involve home health agencies in the certification and delivery of commodity items to the homebound where possible. While the department has initiated a statewide policy allowing homebound clients to authorize another person to pick up and deliver their commodity items, it is important that additional avenues for receipt of commodities by homebound persons be explored and put into operation.

FOOD DISTRIBUTION AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

RECOMMENDATION

That the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) study the feasibility of providing tax incentives that encourage the support of food banks, such as tax breaks for donations by growers to food banks and food distribution program, and incentives which could be provided for trucking and hauling of foodstuffs.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT TDA continue to encourage farmers to make donations to food banks, senior centers, and other organizations and groups providing food assistance to those in need of help.

RECOMMENDATION

That TDA continue to promote the development of farm markets in low-income neighborhoods throughout the state.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Legislature amend the Surplus and Salvage Property Act to specifically allow food banks to purchase surplus items from the state, such as trucks, coolers, freezers and forklifts.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Texas Agricultural Extension Service promote the development of community gardening in Texas, through such activities as: providing technical assistance and information; identification of vacant public lands and facilitation of local and statewide projects; and possible inclusion of a community gardening program into the Texas Agricultural Extension Network.

RATIONALE

A survey conducted by this committee of food banks throughout the state revealed that transportation is the major expense incurred by food banks after personnel and rent. Tax incentives to promote contributions of trucking and hauling could help significantly to modify this expense. A majority of food banks also cite the difficulties experienced in meeting overall operating costs and obtaining a sufficient number of trucks, freezers and coolers to handle the volume of food received for distribution. A specific amendment to the State Surplus and Salvage Property Act could enhance the ability of food banks to handle and distribute donated food by providing access to surplus state equipment. Food banks cite a general shortage in nutritious foodstuffs such as produce, milk, meat and poultry. Increased donations of produce from growers would help provide essential nutrients to recipients, particularly those experiencing a shortage of food. In a statewide survey conducted by this committee food banks report that an average of 65% of their food distribution goes for emergency use.

Farm markets are another sound way to connect growers and consumers, thereby enabling consumers to purchase the freshest items at reasonable and competitive prices. The development of farm markets in inner city and low-income neighborhoods can help foster a sense of community cooperation and provide vital access for those who may otherwise have great difficulties obtaining fresh food and produce. While markets in such neighborhoods have not been developed on a broadscale basis, TDA should assume an active role in fostering this type of initiative.

Community gardening is a viable alternative enabling citizens to become more self-reliant in the production of food for their households. The development of statewide community gardening program through the Texas Agricultural Extension Service could provide coordination of garden projects, information and referral, technical assistance, review and analysis of garden sites using vacant public lands, and general public awareness. The Austin Community Garden program is well known throughout the nation for its success and for its assistance to the many other communities requesting help in getting started. It could serve as a model program for the state. HCR 135, adopted in 1983 by the 68th Legislature encouraged community gardening on public land and made available a computerized listing of all idle state land. This committee encourages continued legislative support of community gardening as a cost-effective component of a system to address hunger and nutritional needs in Texas.

STATEWIDE NUTRITION POLICY, PLANNING AND COORDINATING

RECOMMENDATION

That a state-level Nutrition Coordinating Council be established in the Office of the Governor to carry out functions related to nutrition policy, planning, and coordination in Texas. Responsibilities of the Council would include such activities as the following:

1. Develop short-range and long-range state plans for food assistance and nutrition services in Texas, and periodically review and as necessary revise the plans; monitor implementation of the plans on an ongoing basis.
2. Make recommendations to the Governor, the Legislature, state agencies, and others as appropriate, relating to suggested improvements in the delivery system to ensure quality, efficiency, and effectiveness;
3. Identify barriers and areas of unmet need regarding food assistance and nutrition services, and develop recommended strategies for remedying them;
4. Take leadership role in coordination of nutrition and food-related resources to ensure maximum program effectiveness and efficiency;
5. Promote the integration of nutrition components into all appropriate healthcare programs in Texas;
6. Serve as a resource and clearinghouse regarding nutrition and food assistance information and issues;
7. Promote nutrition education for all Texans; promote public awareness programs and information services for members of the general public and the professional community related to nutrition issues;

Membership on the Council should be by gubernatorial appointment and should include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following: representatives from all state agencies involved in nutrition and/or food assistance services; representatives from the Governor's office and Legislature; service providers from local communities; other professionals in the field of nutrition; representatives from churches and voluntary organizations; consumer representation; and other citizen members.

Each state agency representative on the Council should serve in a liaison capacity with the other agency representatives to improve interagency coordination regarding nutrition and food assistance programs, especially in instances where more than one agency is involved in delivery of similar or related services or in serving similar populations.

RATIONALE

Texas' delivery system in the areas of food assistance and nutrition services is notably fragmented, as repeatedly documented in public testimony presented before this committee by both consumers and providers. This fragmentation is perhaps even more pronounced than that in many other parts of the health and human services system because food assistance and nutrition services involve such a variety of agencies and groups in both the public and private sectors. Currently, no entity is responsible for the coordination of these services, and communication among the various agencies and groups involved is often sparse and unsystematic.

With recognition of the fragmented nature of our system of food and nutrition resources, it is crucial that the state make the best and most efficacious use of these resources by establishing comprehensive short and long-range plans, developing a clearinghouse of information, and promoting nutrition education among health professionals and the general public. Such effective coordination and methodical planning would eliminate duplication between agencies and promote methods that decrease healthcare costs while meeting the nutritional needs of Texans.

This committee views favorably the recent trend toward an interagency, interdisciplinary approach to coordination and planning. Such a strategy, when applied to food assistance and nutrition services in Texas should help to decrease fragmentation while ensuring that the needs of individual clients are more adequately met. It should be useful in designing the most efficient delivery system possible, through both short-term and long-range planning activities.

The Interagency Panel on Nutrition and Wellness established by the Governor in 1984 could be expanded to incorporate these objectives.

NUTRITION EDUCATION

RECOMMENDATION

That nutrition education be phased in as a component of health, fitness, science, and home economics curricula in Texas public schools. The Committee supports the provisions of House Bill 246, passed by the 68th Texas Legislature, and recommends continued implementation of this legislation.

RECOMMENDATION

That nutrition education programs be targeted to "high risk" groups such as pregnant and nursing women, infants and children, elderly persons, and individuals at risk of developing nutrition-related chronic diseases. State agencies, such as the Texas Department of Health, the Texas Department of Human Resources, and the Texas Department on Aging, having ongoing contact with these populations, should give priority to the development of such programs as an important component of preventive services.

RECOMMENDATION

That nutrition education be an integral component in the training and continuing education of health and allied health professionals by the appropriate educational institutions. The various professional associations could play a significant and cost-effective role in this process by routinely disseminating up-to-date nutritional information to their memberships.

RECOMMENDATION

That nutrition education materials, such as the USDA Dietary Guidelines, be disseminated to the general public through a variety of approaches, including the mass media. The Nutrition Policy and Coordinating Council, as recommended by this Committee, could serve as an appropriate clearinghouse and coordination point for this type of public awareness program.

RATIONALE

The need for effective nutrition education has been highlighted by numerous groups addressing health concerns. In 1983, the Texas Legislature enacted House Bill 246, mandating certain revisions to curricula in grades K-12 and delineating the essential elements for each course. The redesign of health curricula should also include an emphasis on health promotion and nutrition education. This committee encourages the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to work cooperatively with members of the various health professions, possibly in the form of a consortium, and with the Texas Department of Health in the implementation of this legislation. It would also seem crucial that in-service training for teachers be provided in this issue area as curriculum changes are instituted. TEA is encouraged to coordinate these efforts with the federally-funded Nutrition Education

and Training program administered by the Texas Department of Human Resources. This committee strongly believes that nutrition education should be woven into the curriculum throughout the school year, and in a variety of subject areas as appropriate, rather than be presented in a self-contained, one semester health course. The Texas Conference on Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, in its *"1990 Objectives"*, has also endorsed this as a preferable approach.

While the inclusion of nutrition education in public school curricula should serve as an important preventive health measure in the years to come, segments of our population who are already identified as being "at-risk" of developing nutrition-related diseases could derive significant and immediate benefit from increased nutrition education efforts targeted to them by state agencies. This committee urges the agencies to maximize opportunities to provide nutrition education services to these "at-risk" individuals. Good nutrition practices may result in significant improvements in health status and quality of life, and as a secondary benefit, some of the costly health services which governmental agencies must now provide could be reduced, prevented, or delayed.

Similar advantages can be seen in promoting more extensive nutrition education among the general public. Notable positive results have already been achieved through public awareness campaigns targeted to educate the public about the negative health consequences which can result from excessive salt and fat in the diet. Through an extension of these efforts, many nutrition-related chronic diseases could be prevented or curbed.

Just as health promotion issues are being recognized as key elements of school curricula and public education in Texas, preventive measures are becoming more prevalent in the education and continuing education of health and allied health professionals. Nutrition knowledge and training should be imperative in the preparation of these professionals. This committee endorses recommendations made in the *"1990 Objectives"* favoring the inclusion of nutrition as an integral component in education of health professionals.

NUTRITION MONITORING AND SURVEILLANCE

RECOMMENDATION

That the Texas Department of Health (TDH) initiate and maintain a nutrition monitoring and surveillance program, with particular focus on high risk populations such as pregnant women, infants, children, and elderly persons. Factors considered in monitoring and surveillance may include, but not necessarily be limited to, health status indicators, heights and weights, food consumption, and household expenditures for food.

RECOMMENDATION

That nutrition indices be included, where appropriate, in data collection, retrieval, and analysis systems administered by state agencies.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Texas Department of Health (TDH) participate in the Pediatric Surveillance and Pregnancy Surveillance programs operated by the U.S. Center for Disease Control, which provides efficient feedback to local programs regarding participants at greatest nutritional risk and constitutes baseline data for nutrition surveillance of the state's WIC population.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Legislature encourage state-supported medical schools to facilitate the participation of medical students in the operation of nutrition surveillance and screening programs at health clinics and other sites throughout the state.

RATIONALE

Nutrition monitoring and surveillance is a continuous process of data collection and analysis that is able to provide health professionals and political leaders with accurate information reflecting the nutritional status of the population. This process thereby provides a basis for planning and the allocation of resources for effective health-related programs. A system of nutrition monitoring and surveillance may provide specific data on defined sub-groups of the population who are identified as being at risk, information leading to the analysis of causes of specific nutritional and health problems, and early warning of developing problems in order to develop timely interventions. It is also valuable in evaluating the effectiveness of programs, identifying characteristics of clients who utilize specified programs, and promoting decisions by the state regarding allocation of resources for maximum effectiveness of programs.

Nutrition monitoring and surveillance would establish a baseline of data in Texas that is currently not available. It would provide the state with the ability to show "before and after" trends of programs and enable administrators to compare the health and nutrition status indicators of different population groups

in different areas of the state. This type of organized and coordinated statewide data-gathering system could meaningfully organize information already routinely collected by agencies and organizations at the state and local level. Gaps in data can be met by the initiation of new methods of data collection integrated into already-existing programs with minimal cost.

Texas can immediately begin participating in two nutrition monitoring and surveillance programs already in operation by the U.S. Center for Disease Control. Participation in these Pregnancy and Pediatric Surveillance programs is inexpensive and can provide a descriptive epidemiology of those individuals manifesting nutrition problems, indicate the severity of the problems, and keep track of individuals over time in order to monitor changes and improvements. The Texas Department of Health is currently considering the option of participating in this program.

The importance of developing an ongoing nutrition data system has been highlighted by the Texas Health and Human Services Coordinating Council, the Texas Conference on Disease Prevention and Health Promotion in its *1990's Objectives* and by the Social Policy Research Group at Texas A & M University in *Nutrition in Texas: Problems and Prospects*. The need for nutrition monitoring and surveillance was supported as early as 1969 by the Governor's Committee on Food, Nutrition, and Health in Texas.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

THE HISTORY OF AMERICA'S EFFORTS TO FIGHT HUNGER

> "It would be a national tragedy even if one American child is forced to go to bed hungry at night, or if one senior citizen is denied the dignity of proper nutrition."
>
> —Ronald Reagan, President of the United States of America

Hunger in America can be traced back to the increasing urbanization of America in the early part of this century. By the time the Great Depression hit, many Americans had moved off the farm. Their departure from the farm-based economy and the severe economic hardships of the Great Depression created a situation where many Americans were not getting enough to eat. The Agricultural Commodity and Food Stamp Programs originated in the 1930's as America's first federal responses to dealing with hunger. The Agricultural Commodity Program was established because Congress was concerned with the plight of American farmers who were losing their farms and the hunger of many American families that couldn't keep enough food on their tables. In 1939, the Food Stamp Program was first created to help the many people who were still out of work. It operated until 1943. In 1946, Congress passed the National School Lunch Act to protect the health and wellbeing of America's children and to encourage the consumption of agricultural commodities. In 1961, President Kennedy re-established the Food Stamp Program on a pilot basis in eight counties. The School Breakfast Program was authorized in 1965 when Congress became concerned that children from rural areas and poor children were not getting breakfast at home before coming to school.

In 1967, national attention was focused on the fact that many poor children in the rural south were inadequately nourished. Several thousand of these children were examined by nationally recognized pediatricians and found to be suffering from hunger and disease. This study, funded by the Field Foundation, took place in 1967, and was followed by a number of important efforts to study the problem of hunger: the U.S. Senate established the Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs, the Public Health Service conducted a National Nutrition Survey in ten states including Texas, and the Citizens' Board of Inquiry into Hunger and Malnutrition in the United States held independent hearings throughout the nation.

All of these efforts essentially focused on the same primary theme: hunger existed in America and was a problem most serious for low-income Americans. The first Nationwide Food Consumption Survey, conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), revealed that low-income families, largely due to resource limitations, generally did not eat nutritiously adequate diets. The Citizens' Board, composed of prominent citizens from all backgrounds, also went so far as to detail the inadequacies of food assistance available at the time. The need for a serious effort by the federal government to provide food assistance became apparent and was further supported by the 1969 television documentary "Hunger in America" which stimulated strong and widespread public awareness of the problem.

The fight against hunger was an issue that mobilized the resources of people and programs in both the public and private sectors and at all levels of government. The expanded awareness and concern of that time were precipitating factors in the origin, growth, and enduring strength of many of our current federal food assistance programs.

The availability of federal food assistance programs was expanded significantly during the 1960's and early 1970's to include nutrition programs for elderly persons, the Summer Food Program for Children, the Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (popularly known as WIC), and the School Breakfast Program. Also during this time consistent Federal regulations were established for the Food Stamp Program and free and reduced-price meals were made available to low-income children through the School Lunch and Breakfast Programs.

Overall, these programs were found to be very effective in working to eliminate hunger during the 1970's. The visible evidence included a second National Food Consumption Survey conducted in 1977 which found marked improvements in the diets of low-income people; a follow-up Field Foundation Study by a team of health professionals re-visited 1967 sites and found far fewer malnourished people; and evaluations of the WIC Program showed that it had a positive effect on pregnancy outcomes and on maintaining the positive health of low-income mothers, infants, and children. A nationwide longitudinal evaluation also demonstrated the positive nutritional benefits of the Nutrition Program for the Elderly.

But in 1981, a resurgence of hunger began to appear. Documented by government statistics, re-

ported growth in emergency food assistance by the private sector, medical reports and health studies showing inadequate growth in low-income children due to poor nutrition and lack of food, and studies by public, religious and civic organizations, the problem has continued to grow.

The need has not declined in 1984, and conditions not apparent since the 1960's are being seen again. During the last three years, soup kitchens and food pantries have been springing up everywhere and report serving primarily families with children. A third study by Field Foundation doctors in 1984 included visits to El Paso, the Lower Rio Grande Valley, and Houston. An eminent pediatrician, a veteran of all three Field Foundation studies conducted since 1967 provided these observations while in Texas: "In 1977 when we went back to the same places that we had visited in 1967, we still saw poverty, but the people, particularly the children, were not hungry. Hunger and malnutrition were almost completely eliminated by the Food Stamp, WIC, School Lunch and School Breakfast programs. But now in 1984, it looks like we are drifting back to the way things were in 1967, only this time there will be even more people affected."

During the past four years, Congressional budgetary actions have had adverse effects upon federal social programs that aid the hungry, malnourished, unemployed and poor. The growing ranks of poverty-level families and the increased incidence of hunger and malnutrition have been evidence of the effect of these budgetary reductions. The recession of 1982-83 and an unemployment rate that peaked at a post-Depression high of 10.7% in December of 1983 were also significant factors responsible for the increased numbers of needy Americans and the re-emergence of hunger as a visibly growing problem in the U.S. The budget cuts have brought about ominous consequences for the poverty population. Significant reductions in expenditures have indeed restricted the helping hand of the federal government and have created gaps into which a growing number of individuals are now falling.

Since 1981, some 4.6 million Americans have been dropped from federal food assistance programs due to federal budget cut-backs. One participant in eight was cut while another 17 million Americans had their benefits reduced as a result of the decreases.

Texas was also hard hit by the cutbacks in federally-funded programs. In 1982, federal reductions in food and nutrition assistance in our state totaled $79.5 million. The Food Stamp and School Lunch and Breakfast Programs were affected the most critically; federal allocations for the Food Stamp Program decreased $46.2 million in state fiscal year 1982, while the School Lunch and Breakfast Programs experienced a $18.5 million reduction. The Summer Food and the Child Care Food Programs were reduced by $1.3 million and $1.2 million respectively. These cuts were implemented just as the poverty ranks in Texas were growing for the first time in many years and pockets of the state began to report excessively high unemployment levels. Growing economic difficulties in Texas were representative of a nationwide trend.

On September 8, 1983 President Reagan created the President's Task Force on Food Assistance in response to widespread criticism of the damaging effects of cutbacks in federal food assistance programs. The task force was mandated for 90 days to study federal food assistance efforts and make recommendations to the president.

The task force held seven formal hearings around the country and received most of its public attention after former Presidential Counselor Edwin Meese dismissed the existence of hunger as "a lot of anecdotal stuff." The task force also asserted that it was impossible to estimate the extent of hunger in the U.S.A.

Conclusions of the study made by the task force were as follows:

> "the food assistance safety net provides the opportunity for assistance to needy Americans."
>
> "that some people are hungry."

Their recommendations were:

1. To allow states the option of establishing autonomous food assistance programs.
2. To improve program targeting and administration.
3. To encourage private sector food assistance efforts.
4. To improve the measurement of poverty and nutritional status.
5. To address the specific problem of homeless people.
6. To continue emergency assistance to areas of acute need through public-private partnerships.
7. To increase the distribution of existing commodities.

Follow-up hearings and reports released by Senator Edward Kennedy, chairman of the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee and Representative Leon Panetta, chairman of the House Subcommittee on Domestic Marketing, Consumer Rela-

tions, and Nutrition, document the existence and growth of hunger in this country and indicate that the President's Task Force fell far short of clearly delineating the extent of hunger in America. These reports also made recommendations to Congress on what actions these committees believed were necessary to alleviate hunger in America.

In 1984, Representative Panetta introduced the Hunger Relief Act (H.R.5151) in the House of Representatives. The Act originally was an omnibus vehicle for child nutrition, the elderly, WIC, and Food Stamps.

The bill was later substantially revised and cosponsored with Representative Tom Jeffords of Vermont. The new legislation was intended to slow the growth of hunger by widening program eligibility standards and increasing program benefits. In early August 1984, the House passed a revised version of H.R.5151 by a vote of 364 to 39. Members of the House of Representatives noted the strong House support for H.R.5151 and believe provisions of the legislation will be incorporated in any food program action next year. By the time Congress adjourned in October of 1984, the 98th session had approved modest increases for all recipients of Food Stamp benefits, an increase in funds for the WIC Program, an increase in funding for the Nutrition Program for the Elderly, (authorized by the Older Americans Act), and approved funding for emergency food and shelter programs.

APPENDIX B

FEDERAL AND STATE-FUNDED FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS ADMINISTERED IN TEXAS

THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM

Food Stamps are coupons issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture that can be used in place of money to purchase food. They are issued by a state social services agency through local and regional social services offices. These coupons cannot be used to purchase tobacco or other inedible items, alcohol or pet food. The amount of stamps issued is determined by household size and the amount of income available after all allowable deductions are made from the household's gross income. The Food Stamp Program is the nation's primary food assistance program and the only federally-funded food assistance program that serves entire families of low income people. Food Stamp allotments are based on the Thrifty Food Plan, the least costly of four food plans developed for families by USDA. If a household is not eligible for the full allotment based on the household's income, they will have to spend additional dollars to obtain a nutritious diet.

Application for food stamps is open to any U.S. citizen or alien admitted legally for permanent residency. Individuals and households eligible for participation in the Food Stamp Program must have low incomes and few financial resources in order to be approved to receive benefits. In the case of working households, eligibility may be determined because of low wages, large family size or extraordinary expenses (such as due to a health emergency).

With the exception of households where there is an elderly or disabled person, countable gross income cannot exceed 130 percent of the "poverty level" established by the federal government and must be below 100 percent of the poverty level after deductions are taken. For an elderly or disabled applicant, there is no cap to gross income, but after allowable deductions, the household income must also fall below the 100 percent level of poverty. In order to qualify for Food Stamps, the household income must be less than the net income levels listed in the chart below. A determination of eligibility is required within 30 days from the date an application is filed.

NET INCOME LIMITS

IN ORDER TO QUALIFY FOR FOOD STAMPS

Household Size	Net Income Limit
1.....	$ 415.00
2.....	560.00
3.....	705.00
4.....	850.00
5.....	995.00
6.....	1,140.00
7.....	1,285.00
8.....	1,430.00
Each additional member +	**145.00**

The dollar value of the Food Stamps a household receives each month is based on household size and income. Approved Food Stamp allotment levels for households with no net income for Fiscal Year 1985 will be:

THRIFTY FOOD PLAN AMOUNTS FOR THOSE WITH NO NET INCOME

October 1984, as adjusted 48 States and D.C.

Household Size	Allotment
1.....	$ 78.00
2.....	143.00
3.....	206.00
4.....	261.00
5.....	310.00
6.....	373.00
7.....	412.00
8.....	471.00
Each additional member +	59.00

Under the original Food Stamp Program, state participation was optional, and states were individually allowed to define eligibility requirements and benefit level. In 1974, due in part to sporadic state and local participation, the Food Stamp Program was made mandatory nationwide and uniform federal regulations were adopted. The emphasis of the Food Stamp Program was to eliminate hunger and malnutrition by increasing the food purchasing power of low income households. The 1977 revisions created the expedited issuance of Food Stamps for emergencies, outreach efforts, and the

standard deductions to assess eligibility which are in place today.

Program participation in Texas developed slowly with only 10 counties participating in 1969. A federal Court Order in 1970 called for the establishment of food stamp assistance programs in all counties of the state. Statewide implementation of the Agriculture and Consumer Protection Act of 1973 brought all Texas counties into the Food Stamp Program in 1974.

In 1984, the Food Stamp Program in Texas was serving a monthly average of 1,333,846 individual recipients comprising some 402,347 households. The figures signify a reduction from past participation totals of 1,350,370 individual recipients and 409,034 households in December 1982. The average Food Stamp caseload for 1983 was 1,357,725. The Texas Department of Human Resources reports that approximately 3.2 million Texans are at or below 125% of poverty, representing rough estimate of the number potentially eligible for Food Stamps. Of these, 41.7% received Food Stamp benefits in 1984 totalling $680,255,062. This breaks down to an average benefit of $138.42 in Food Stamps per month for each of the participating households. The average size of a household participating in the Food Stamp Program in Texas is 3.2 persons. Of food stamp recipients, 68.9% cumulatively are children under age 18, adults over age 55, and disabled individuals, and 67.7% of the households are headed by women.

In Texas, the Food Stamp Program is administered by the Texas Department of Human Resources. State program administration monies are provided through the legislative appropriations process and are matched dollar for dollar by federal government funds.

The Food Stamp program also provides for expedited issuance of benefits in emergency situations. To qualify for expedited issuance, an applicant can have a current gross monthly income of no less than $150 and countable liquid resources of no more than $100. Expedited food stamps must be issued within 5 days to those who are approved. Applicants must positively verify identity, and to the extent possible also verify income, residence, and resource, but lack of verification of these last items is not to cause a delay in expedited issuance. In 1983, the average monthly number of cases awarded emergency food stamps was 14,984. In 1984, this number fell to 7,854 for an average month.

THE NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM

The National School Lunch Program is a federally funded program geared to providing a nutritious lunch to school children. The program is designed to encourage low-income students to eat at school by providing free or reduced price meals depending on eligibility. However, children of all income levels may participate. Children who do not qualify for free or reduced-price lunches pay for their meals for which the program still receives a small government subsidy.

The National School Lunch Program was created through the enactment of the National School Lunch Act of 1946. Like other early federal food assistance programs, the School Lunch Program provided a market for surplus agriculture commodities. The original program was also aimed at reducing undernutrition and nutrition-related health problems among young men eligible for military service. The program was modified in 1962 to provide for reduced-price and free lunches for children who could not afford the full price of lunches. By 1970, Congress had created uniform federal income guidelines for program eligibility for free and reduced-price meals. The Ten State Nutrition Study, which included Texas, reported in 1970 that low-income children depended on the School Lunch Program for at least 40% of their daily nutrition.

In Texas, the School Lunch Program is administered by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), and any Texas school may participate. Participation in the free and reduced-price lunch and breakfast programs was increasing each year until 1982 at which time participation dropped 9.3%. But since 1982, participation has begun to climb steadily and in 1983 there were 5,279 schools operating the program, equalling 95% of the schools in Texas. Of the 2.8 million school age children eligible in 1983, 1,528,268 participated in the program and one million of these students were approved to receive free or reduced price lunches. This constituted 35% of the total school population in public schools.

Due to the limited number of TEA staff assigned to the School Lunch Program, Texas returns to the federal government a major share of the funds earmarked for administration of this program.

THE NATIONAL SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM

Because of Congressional concern for children arriving at school hungry in the morning, the School Breakfast Program was created as a part of the federal Child Nutrition Act of 1966. The program was based on the strong correlation between undernutrition, slow growth rates and decreased learning ability. As in the School Lunch Program, breakfast is served free, at a reduced price or at full price, depending upon the income level of a child's family.

The School Breakfast Program is also administered by the Texas Education Agency. Of the 2.5 million students having access to School Breakfast in 1983, approximately 400,000 participated. Although overall participation is low, participation among low-income children is high, with 86% receiving free or reduced-price breakfasts.

The Texas Department of Human Resources is charged to administer the National School Lunch and Breakfast programs as well as the Special Milk Program to private schools, institutions, and summer camps. The Special Milk Program, originally authorized in the 1950's as a means of reducing dairy surpluses and providing extra or supplemental milk to school children, has been reduced dramatically by the budget reduction measures of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (OBRA) and participation is now restricted to those schools without any other food service program. This has limited the extent of the program considerably.

In May 1984, DHR served 255 schools and institutions 581,000 lunches and 258,000 breakfasts. In June 1984, some 308,000 children were served free milk in about a hundred schools, residential institutions and camps.

NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR THE ELDERLY

The Nutrition Program for the Elderly was established by Congress in 1972 as an Amendment to the Older Americans Act. It consists of two programs, the Congregate Meals Program and the Home-Delivered Meals Program. Participants receive congregate meals at a central location such as a church or senior center while home delivered meals meet the needs of disabled elderly persons and others unable to leave their homes. All individuals over the age of 60 are eligible for the program, which has no income requirements. However, Congress did stipulate that priority be given to those older citizens demonstrating the most need. Population projections since the 1980 census estimate that there are now more than 900,000 elderly persons in Texas living in or near poverty, in Texas.

In Texas, federal monies for the program are distributed by the Texas Department on Aging and the program is administered locally by the 28 State Area Agencies on Aging (AAA). These regional agencies in turn contract with local organizations to provide the congregate and home delivered meals to participating seniors. The State of Texas contributes 5% of the program's funding through legislative appropriation. During the past year, older Texans donated 4.8 million dollars to be channeled directly into maintaining the program. In 1983 there were over 800 congregate and home-delivered meals programs operating in Texas communities through which approximately 46,000 meals were served daily.

In FY 1984, the Department on Aging reports serving 9,463,992 congregate meals to 243,092 unduplicated elderly persons and 3,290,090 home-delivered meals to 47,581 unduplicated elderly persons.

THE SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL FOOD PROGRAM FOR WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN (WIC)

The Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) provides food vouchers to pregnant women, new mothers, and young children who cannot afford an adequate and nutritious diet and are at nutritional risk. The food vouchers are received by the participant and redeemed through participating grocery stores. The vendors then redeem the vouchers through the Texas Department of Health.

More than a food assistance program, (WIC) also provides health screening and nutrition education to its participants. The vouchers allow the recipient to purchase foods such as eggs, milk, juice, cereal, cheese and infant formula. These foods are high in iron, calcium, Vitamins A and C, and protein.

In 1972, Congress implemented a pilot WIC project, due in large part to the Field Foundation study report and the health and nutrition problems that the Field Foundation physicians found in the children of the Mississippi Delta. Based on this pilot program, in 1974, Congress voted overwhelmingly to institute the program on a national basis and assigned to USDA the task of administering it.

Initially, the USDA claimed an inability to manage the medical aspect of the WIC program, and the Ford Administration refused to release the congressionally appropriated funds for its implementa-

tion. It was not until 1976 that the USDA finally began distributing the federal monies to the state health departments and the program was implemented along the lines of Congressional intent.

The Texas Department of Health is responsible for the administration of the WIC Program in Texas. TDH contracts with local community clinics, hospitals, and community action agencies for local service delivery. Program participants visit the WIC clinic for health checkups, nutrition education classes and to obtain vouchers for supplemental foods.

Eligibility requirements stipulate that a recipient must be either a pregnant woman, postpartum nursing or non-nursing mother, infant, or child under age 5, and live in a county participating in the WIC program. Up until 1984, an applicant was required to have an income less than 185% of the federally-established poverty level, and that has now been changed to 150%. They must also be at nutritional risk for one or more of the following: an inadequate diet, poor growth patterns, iron deficiency or a medical history of nutritional problems or problem pregnancies. Pregnant women are certified to receive assistance for their entire pregnancy. Children are required to be re-certified every 6 months. In 1984, Texas has 59 WIC projects operating in 163 counties.

In FY 84, TDH estimated that 814,177 women, infants, and children were eligible for the WIC Program. Of these, 22.1% were being served, totalling 179,964 women, infants, and children. Program participation has increased steadily since 1981 when Texas was only serving 11.4% of those potentially eligible.

The WIC program is not an entitlement program, and its funding is capped by the Congressional budgetary process. Therefore Texas receives a WIC grant each year from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Allocated funds in FY 1981 totaled $48,592,000 and have risen steadily to $83,482,000 in FY 1984, thereby allowing the program to cover more Texas counties and serve a greater percent of the eligible population. The program currently serves 163 counties in the state, and is the third largest program in the nation.

COMMODITY DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM

Federal commodity distribution programs began in the 1930's as a means for disposing surplus agricultural commodities and providing food relief to the needy and unemployed during the Great Depression. Today's federal commodity distribution program is based on many of these same premises and funded by Congressional appropriation to purchase agricultural items in order to maintain price supports and remove surpluses. The commodities then go to state agencies for distribution to community service organizations and schools. In recent years, with commodities surpluses growing rapidly, state administrative agencies are now also offering the commodities directly to needy individuals. The program has been authorized by Congress to continue until September 1985.

Since commodity usage for subsidized program meals has dropped considerably during the past few years, billions of pounds of food have been stockpiled throughout the country. This has led to a direct giveaway program under Title II of the Jobs Bill of 1983. The eligibility guidelines are listed below:

- *Charitable Institutions:* Organizations must be a public or private non-profit, tax exempt institution which serves meals on a regular basis to needy people.
- *Individuals:* Individuals may receive commodities through the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program. Persons receiving AFDC, Food Stamps, SSI, Medicaid or whose income is below 130% of the national poverty guidelines are eligible to participate.

Institutional recipients of commodities include schools, charitable institutions, summer camps, Summer Food Services programs, Child Care Food programs, and sites providing the Nutrition Program for the Elderly.

In Texas, the Commodity Distribution Program is administered by the Texas Department of Human Resources. TDHR distributes the commodities from 15 state warehouses to institutional recipients and those contractors distributing commodities directly to eligible individuals. In 1984, more than 38 million individuals received commodities, composed primarily of emergency cheese and butter rations. Needy families and food assistance providers, including schools, received $162,000,000 worth of food in 1982, and $118,000,000 between July 1983 and July 1984.

THE CHILD CARE FOOD PROGRAM

The Child Care Food Program provides federal dollars to child care institutions so that low-income pre-schoolers can receive nutritious breakfasts, lunches, suppers, and snacks. The program is operated much like the School Lunch program in that child care agencies keep records of the free, reduced-price and full-price meals and are reimbursed for their services. Child care centers may also receive USDA commodities. To participate, child care

agencies must be a public or private non-profit, tax exempt, licensed and non-residential or a part of the public school system. Family day homes may participate if sponsored by a non-profit umbrella agency. The eligibility guidelines are the same as for the School Lunch and Breakfast Programs.

The program began in 1968 as an amendment to the National School Lunch Act and was administered in Texas by the USDA regional office in Dallas until 1978 when administrative duties were turned over to the Texas Department of Human Resources. Reimbursements are now provided to the local child care centers and homes by TDHR. In 1984 Texas had an average of 45,000 children in day care centers, and 12,000 children in family day homes participating in the program.

THE SUMMER FOOD PROGRAM

The Summer Food Program for Children is designed to feed children up to age 18 during the summer months when school food services are not available. The program is funded entirely by the federal government. The program is targeted at low-income areas and eligibility requirements are the same as those for the school lunch and breakfast programs. Program sponsors must be tax-exempt or a public agency and the program is restricted to low-income communities when program sponsors can document that at least one-half of the children are eligible for free or reduced price meals.

The Texas Department of Human Resources handles the statewide administration of the program. Although private non-profit agencies had taken some initiative in providing the food services in certain locales, the program has never enjoyed a large participation rate in Texas. Historically, the private, non-profit community service organizations provided the largest number of meals, but their participation was eliminated through Congressional action in 1982. Current Texas participants include 33 local sponsor schools, local government agencies, and camps serving some 40,000 children. Participation rates are down considerably from 1979–1980 and have declined yearly since that time.

HOME DELIVERED AND CONGREGATE MEALS PROGRAM

The meals program was developed on the state level as a part of Title XX of the Social Security Act. The meals program is designed to provide meals for eligible adults who may be homebound, elderly, or those incapable of preparing their own meals. The program was established to aid the nutritional needs of the client and to prevent or delay premature institutionalization. Both the Texas Department on Aging, using Title III funds, and the Texas Department of Human Resources, using Title XX funds, administer meal programs in Texas. Although Title XX funds are used primarily for home-delivered meals, there are four congregate meal sites in the state. Participants are served a noon meal five days per week. Eight state contractors serve weekend meals to clients who have no one to assist them.

To be eligible, an applicant must be at least 18 years of age, have an income less than $631.40 and have no more than $5,000 in resources. In addition, each applicant must obtain a minimum score on a Functional Assessment Instrument. The applicant's eligibility is determined by Texas Department of Human Resources caseworker staff. Monthly averages in 1984 indicate that there are 4,600 program participants in the state.

NUTRITION EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Nutrition Education and Training Program, created by Congress in 1977, was designed to provide the State Education Agencies 50¢ per student to offer nutrition training for school food services personnel and nutrition education training to teachers. The program was originally funded at $20 million annually on a nationwide basis but the OBRA has reduced federal contributions drastically. The FY 1982 federal appropriation was $5 million. A number of states have discontinued the program due to the lack of federal funds and the administrative delays in sending the monies that have been made available.

The Texas Education Agency was responsible for the administration of the program from 1978–1981. Since 1982, it has been administered by the Texas Department of Human Resources. The program attempts to teach the fundamentals of health and nutrition to children, parents, educators and food service personnel. Services are provided through a 2,000 volume library, nutrition and food service workshops held throughout the state, and technical assistance provided by registered dietitians. In 1984, the TDHR conducted 149 workshops for 2,629 adults who work with 133,929 children in schools, day care centers and family day homes.

THE EXPANDED FOOD NUTRITION AND EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Expanded Food Nutrition and Education Program (EFNEP) is designed to assist low-income families and young persons in developing knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors necessary for nutritionally sound diets. Program goals include the improvement of the total family diet, nutritional adequacy, improved practices in food production, preparation and sanitation, and increased ability to manage food budgets and related resources. The program is directed toward low-income adults responsible for planning and developing meals and low-income 4-H youth who will benefit from the program's educational requirements.

EFNEP was implemented through an amendment to the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1968 with eligibility based on the latest poverty income guidelines. The services are delivered through the direct teaching of paraprofessionals and volunteers in group or one-to-one settings, mailings, or mass media efforts. As a part of the USDA's Cooperative Extension Service, EFNEP is implemented in Texas by the Agricultural Extension Service of the Texas A & M University system. Locally, the program is administered by Extension agents in nine counties of the state. Some 24,000 low-income homemakers participated in 1983 while another 18,000 youths were provided health and nutrition education by the program.

Approximately 60 percent of the homemakers participating in the program have an income equal to or less than the current poverty level. The program has been operating on a budget at level funding of approximately $4 million dollars since 1982. Operations have been cut back from twenty sites in 1980 to ten in 1984 in order to make most efficient use of available funds.

FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (FEMA)

Recognizing the urgent unmet needs of homeless and indigent Americans, in the spring of 1983, Congress included in the "Jobs Stimulus Bill" provisions for a $100,000,000 emergency food and shelter program. One half of the funds ($50 million) was distributed directly to state governments and one half was distributed by a National Board created in the law, composed of representatives of the United Way of America, the Salvation Army, the National Council of Churches, the National Conference of Catholic Charities, the Council of Jewish Federation, Inc., the American Red Cross, and chaired by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). A grant process was established through which the National Board awarded funds to local boards and private voluntary organizations. Texas received $2,506,823 directly from FEMA and the Texas Department of Community Affairs was designated by Governor Mark White to administer this direct allocation through community action agencies in areas of high unemployment. In addition, Texas received $676,552 through the National Board disbursement process, which was handled by the private sector through groups such as United Way.

In December of 1983, Congress extended the program with a supplemental appropriation of $40,000,000 which was distributed by the National Board. Under FEMA II, Texas received $1,657,468. An additional $70,000,000 appropriated by Congress to fund FEMA III will be disbursed by the National Board later this year. While the implementation of this supplemental program will remain essentially the same, certain restrictions have been removed, including the use of grant money to pay for utilities, shelter repair, or renovation to existing facilities. A further revision now allows units of local government to be eligible as grant recipients. In awarding grants under FEMA III, the Board plans to consider poverty and unemployment data in addition to unemployment rates.

THE TEMPORARY EMERGENCY RELIEF PROGRAM (TERP)

A combination of factors, including a downturn in the state's economy, an influx of persons moving into Texas from out of state and from other countries, rising unemployment, and significant budget cuts in federal funds for health and human services programs, resulted in a drastic and unprecedented demand for emergency services to meet basic needs in the early 1980's. Although city and county governments and public and private service providers were expanding their efforts to provide emergency assistance, they were rapidly overwhelmed by the rising demand and could not depend on any predictable Federal programs to help meet the rising need.

In early 1983, concerned citizens in the public and private sectors formed a task force to formulate a proposal for immediate consideration by the Legislature, which had already convened for its 4½ month biennial session. The task force included representatives from state and local governments, state and local agencies, the United Way, academic institutions, churches, advocacy groups, and others. Their

stated goal was to draft enabling legislation for a program to be funded by pure state dollars and local matching funds targeted to the most critical needs identified through communications networks available to the task force, namely emergency assistance with such necessities as food, shelter, clothing, and utilities. Administration was to be streamlined to the greatest degree possible, with flexible guidelines and a minimum of "red tape."

From the task force's deliberations and subsequent legislative action emerged the Temporary Emergency Relief Program (TERP). The enabling legislation, (House Bill 1732) directed that TERP be administered at the state level by the Texas Department of Human Resources and authorized a maximum of $5 million funding for the program, although only $1.5 million was actually appropriated. Since the program was authorized under the legislation for only two years, a Legislative Review Committee was created in the statute to monitor the implementation of TERP and to assess the need for its possible continuation at the end of the biennium.

The Department of Human Resources developed a formula for awarding grants under TERP, and solicited applications from county judges in all 254 Texas counties in September, 1983. In this first phase of the program, 61 counties received state TERP funds, which were to be matched 50–50 with local monies, as specified in the enabling legislation. Counties declining to participate in Phase I were given a second opportunity in Phase II, along with local agencies in their areas. Competitive procurement procedures were applied in Phase II, and contracts are now pending with participating agencies, many of which will be serving more than one county. Initial feedback from Phase I indicates that the largest percentage (58%) of TERP funds were used for utility bills, with the next highest portion (35%) paying for food and housing. Prior to January, 1985, the Legislative Review Committee will report to the Legislature its findings regarding the success of the TERP program, possible reauthorization through continuation of the enabling statute, suggested appropriations, and any modifications the Review Committee would recommend should the program be extended.